



Ciller refuses coalition offer

ANKARA (R) — Turkish Prime Minister-designate Bülent Ecevit's efforts to form a new coalition suffered a severe blow on Wednesday when conservative leader Tansu Ciller rejected his offer to join a government. Ecevit said instead he would try to form a minority coalition with Ciller's rival conservative leader, Mesut Yilmaz. Ciller, Turkey's first woman prime minister, said she might tacitly support the plan if other parties agreed to do the same. "She said that she definitely rejected our proposal of a three-way coalition," Ecevit told reporters in parliament after the meeting. "I do not give up easily. I said I am willing to form a minority government." President Süleyman Demirel asked veteran leftist Ecevit to form a government last week after the collapse in November of a minority coalition led by Yilmaz under corruption allegations. Any new government would probably run the country only until elections, set by parliament for April 1999.

Jordan Times

An independent Arab political daily published by the Jordan Press Foundation
جوردان تايمز يومية سياسية تصدر بالانجليزية عن المؤسسة الصحفية الأردنية «الراي»

Albright to visit Jordan

WASHINGTON (R) — Secretary of State Madeleine Albright will visit Jordan on Dec. 15 after accompanying President Bill Clinton to Israel and the Palestinian Gaza Strip, a senior State Department official said on Tuesday. Albright would meet with Jordanian officials for several hours to assess progress in the Middle East peace process, said the official, who asked not to be named. His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan, the Regent, on Saturday said Jordan's security would suffer if Palestinians were denied their "legitimate right" to an independent state. Jordan, home to over a million registered Palestinian refugees and many more Jordanians of Palestinian descent, signed a peace treaty with Israel in 1994. His Majesty King Hussein, who is in the United States undergoing cancer treatment, played a pivotal role in getting Israel and the Palestinians to finally sign a peace deal in Wye after days of marathon negotiations and delays.

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Crown Prince receives Aziz

AMMAN (Petra) — His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan, the Regent, on Wednesday received at the Royal Court Iraqi Deputy Prime Minister Tariq Aziz. Attending the audience were Prime Minister Fayez Tarawneh and Royal Court Chief Jawad Anani.

Bonn to try help Israel U.N. Security Council bid

BONN (R) — German Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer said on Wednesday Bonn would do what it could to support Israel's bid to gain a seat on the United Nations Security Council (A/C), his spokesman said. Foreign Ministry spokesman Martin Erdmann said Fischer met leaders of the American Jewish Council for talks in Bonn and that the group asked Germany's help with their campaign to step up Israel's status within the United Nations.

45 Algerians killed

ALGIERS (AFP) — Suspected Islamist rebels massacred 45 people overnight in an Algerian mountain hamlet, security service said, reporting a new bout of slaughter that has risen fears of another bloody Ramadan. The community near Tadjena in the Daira highlands close to Chlef, some 200 kilometres west of Algiers, had already been attacked at the weekend, when seven people were killed and five injured. Security forces, publishing a rising toll from the latest incident, gave no details of the circumstances, but a parliamentary deputy intervened in a debate being broadcast live on television to say that 44 people had died and eight women were abducted in the attack.

Finland to open a contact office on the West Bank

HELSINKI (AFP) — Finland on Tuesday announced it will open a contact office next year in Ramallah, on the West Bank, to coordinate its aid to the Palestinian National Authority (PNA). Since 1995, foreign states have been allowed to open liaison bureaux in areas under the control of the PNA, but they are not considered diplomatic missions. Austria, Denmark, Germany, and the Netherlands have already opened similar structures.

Israel to court-martial soldier

TELAVIV (AP) — The Israeli army decided today to court-martial a soldier whose beating by a Palestinian mob shocked the country and froze the peace process. Cpl. Assaf Meyara, 19, will be charged with not carrying a loaded weapon and leaving his base without permission. However, the army will not bring charges against the young soldier for not firing his M-16 rifle on his attackers, who smashed the windows of the car he was travelling in, dragged him out and struck him repeatedly in the head with chunks of concrete.

Iraq says power cuts will continue

BAGHDAD (AFP) — Iraq's industry and finance minister said on Wednesday that power cuts would continue through the winter because of the late arrival of spare parts needed to repair power stations. Adnan Abdul Majid, quoted by the official INA news agency, accused "the American and British delegates on the U.N. Sanctions Committee of delaying the approval of contracts" for the spare parts.

Violence rages ahead of Clinton's trip Palestinian teenager shot dead, 80 injured

RAMALLAH (R) — A Palestinian teenager was shot dead and 80 people were hurt in West Bank clashes on Wednesday, the 11th anniversary of the Palestinian uprising against the Israeli occupation witnesses said.

Jihad Ayyad, 16, was the second Palestinian killed in this week's violent run-up to U.S. President Bill Clinton's December 12-15 visit meant to foster peace between Israel and the Palestinians.

Seventy Palestinians were injured on Monday making this one of the bloodiest weeks in the West Bank since protests in May.

Palestinian hospital officials said Ayyad was shot in the chest with live ammunition during clashes with Israeli security forces near the Palestinian-ruled town of Ramallah. The Israeli army said it was checking the report.

Palestinians threw rocks at Israeli soldiers and cars on roads around West Bank towns and Jewish settlements in violence reminiscent of the

intifada that began in 1987 and largely died out after the Oslo interim peace deal in 1993.

Palestinian businesses and schools were closed for a general strike commemorating the uprising and to protest at Israel's refusal to release Palestinian security prisoners under an October land-for-security deal brokered by Clinton.

At least 27 protesters were wounded, five seriously, from rubber-coated bullets fired by Israeli troops in Bethlehem, witnesses said.

Another 29 were hurt in protests near Ramallah. Some 33 were injured elsewhere including near Nablus in the northern West Bank, where television film showed Israeli soldiers used live ammunition and percussion grenades against rioters.

The Israeli army said it was checking that live ammunition was fired.

It said four Israeli soldiers, three paramilitary border police and three Israeli citi-

zens were slightly injured by stones thrown by Palestinians.

The Islamic Resistance Movement, Hamas, said in a statement its founder, Sheikh Ahmed Yassin, under Palestinian house arrest in Gaza, had begun a hunger strike to affirm the "sacred right" of the movement's detainees to freedom and dignity.

Palestinian officials said nearly 2,000 political prisoners were refusing food in a hunger strike that began in Israeli jails a week ago.

In self-ruled Jericho, students threw rocks through the windows of a recently opened casino in a sign of dissatisfaction over what they see as the failure of the Palestinian Authority to persuade Israel to free the detainees.

Later on Wednesday, thousands attended the funeral of Nasser Erekat, 20, who was shot by Israeli soldiers in the Palestinian town of Abu Dis on Monday.

(Continued on page 12)

Arafat determined to declare state

HEBRON (AFP) — Defying Israeli warnings and U.S. appeals, Palestinian President Yasser Arafat reaffirmed Wednesday his intention to declare a Palestinian state and again accused Israel of violating an agreement on the release of political prisoners.

"We will declare a Palestinian state, we have already said it," Arafat told 1,000 activists from his Fateh movement who met in Hebron to mark the 11th anniversary of the 1987-1994 intifada uprising against Israeli occupation.

Arafat said 127 nations recognised the Palestinian state when the PLO made its first symbolic declaration of independence in 1988, "more than recognised Israel."

But with U.S. President Bill Clinton due on an historic visit to the Palestinian territories and Israel this weekend, Arafat stopped short of setting a date for the declaration.

In earlier statements Arafat had said he would proclaim a state next May, when interim

peace accords with Israel expire.

Arafat mocked warnings by Israel that it will not carry out further West Bank withdrawals required under the U.S.-brokered Wye River accord if he continues saying he will unilaterally declare a state with Jerusalem as its capital.

"I say that Jerusalem will be our capital whether Sharon likes it or not," he said, referring to Israel's hardline foreign minister, Ariel Sharon.

"We will liberate our lands centimetre by centimetre and we will build our state stone by stone. Whoever does not like it, can drink the water of the Dead Sea," he said.

Arafat also rejected Israeli and U.S. claims that a clause in the Wye River accord requiring Israel to release Palestinian prisoners left Israel free to release common criminals and not political detainees.

(Continued on page 12)

Israeli jets spark panic with low-level flights over Beirut

BEIRUT (AFP) — Israeli jets flew at low altitude over Beirut on Wednesday, breaking the sound barrier twice and triggering panic among residents of the capital, security sources said.

The warplanes flew over Beirut first at about 9 a.m. local time and again approximately two hours later, the sources said.

During the first sortie, two loud booms were heard across Beirut and its southern suburbs, a stronghold of the Hizbollah resistance group, as well as over Palestinian bases south of the capital.

Security sources had initially reported Israeli air raids on hills in Na'meh, about 15 kilometres south of Beirut, where the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine-General Command maintains bases.

"The magnitude of the

booms at first seemed like air strikes, but then it was confirmed that no missiles were fired," a security source told AFP.

"The warplanes flew at low altitude over Beirut, its southern suburbs and Na'meh, provoking fears among residents and students in various schools," the source said.

Witnesses told AFP that streets were deserted in Na'meh while in Beirut's mainly Shiite southern suburbs students were seen returning home.

The Israeli air force frequently hits the Na'meh bases of the PFLP-GC, which opposes the Israeli-Palestinian peace process.

Israel last attacked Hizbollah offices in Beirut's southern suburbs during its April 1996 Grapes of Wrath offensive in Lebanon.

House rejects security firms draft law

By Fairouz Abu-Ghazaleh

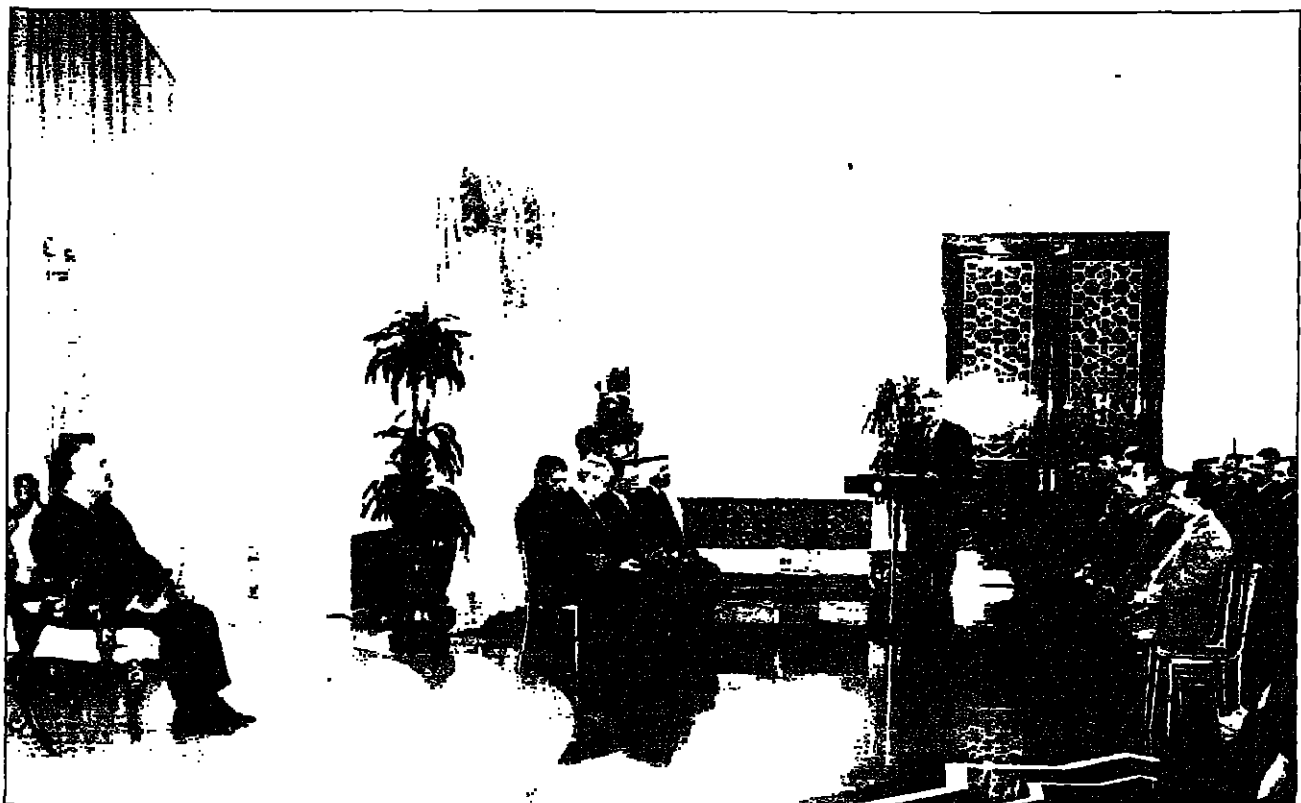
AMMAN — The Lower House of Parliament on Wednesday rejected the government's draft law aimed at regulating the establishment and the operation of security service providers.

There are more than seven licensed security agencies, which provide services to embassies, hospitals, banks, private residences, institutions and individuals. These agencies are governed by the Companies Law; there is no specific law enacted to regulate security service providers.

Deputy Abdul Karim Dughmi, who proposed the rejection of the draft, told the Jordan Times he believed "there was no need for such a law."

Dughmi said the lawmakers had not discussed the draft with the government. The proposal "just landed in our hands" without prior notice, he said.

(Continued on page 12)



Lower House of Parliament Speaker Abdul Hadi Al Majali on Wednesday delivers the House's reply to the Speech from the Throne before HRH Crown Prince Hassan, the Regent

In reply to Speech from the Throne: Lower House urges government to give priority to economic growth

AMMAN (Petra) — The Lower House of Parliament Wednesday called on the government to prepare a national economic restructuring programme that would retain a balance between financial and monetary reform and ensure economic growth.

In reply to the Speech From the Throne delivered to HRH Crown Prince Hassan, the Regent, House Speaker Abdul Hadi Majali said that it was hoped that the economic restructuring programme of the past years would help the Kingdom meet its social challenges and boost economic growth. But instead, financial and monetary reforms were achieved at the expense of national economic growth, which has exacerbated the country's social ills, according

to the House.

Reading the House statement before the Crown Prince at the Royal Court, Majali said it has become necessary to launch a new national programme for the coming years benefiting from the experience of the past programme and its positive and negative aspects as a combined effort on the part of the public and private sectors in order to achieve the aspired goals.

What is expected is a new programme that will take into account social, economic and political considerations, particularly the problems of poverty and unemployment, the statement said.

Any effort aimed at boosting the Jordanian economy and encouraging investment will remain ineffective unless it is

coupled with a serious and drastic effort to deal with corruption, favouritism, bureaucracy and negligence, warned the statement.

It said that these social ills hamper the state's functions and attempts at achieving development and economic growth. The House demanded that these ills be tackled with transparency and that "a reward and punishment" strategy be applied whereby competent leaders are chosen for the task which includes modernising the public administration system.

Underlining the importance of the private sector's contributions to the economy, the House reaffirmed the need for the private sector to shoulder its responsibilities, increase production, demonstrate com-

petence and open new markets for the national products.

The House said Jordan's entry into the World Trade Organisation and the European partnership will pose challenges to the national economy and will require a combined national effort involving both sectors to boost production, improve the quality of goods, modernise production systems, acquire expertise and modern technology and raise the local workers' skills.

Referring to education, the House voiced appreciation of efforts aimed at increasing the number of schools and modernising the educational system and called for more attention to be given to teachers.

(Continued on page 12)

Jordan, EU working closely to ensure being 'associated' with final status talks — Moratinos

By Francesca Ciriaci

AMMAN — Jordan and the EU are working in "full understanding and coordination" to ensure that both will be "associated" with the Palestinian-Israeli final status negotiations, according to visiting EU special envoy to the Middle East Miguel Moratinos.

At a press conference following talks with HRH Crown Prince Hassan, the Regent, Moratinos announced on Wednesday that Jordan and the EU have established two joint task forces on water and refugees, two of five issues to

be tackled in Palestinian-Israeli final status talks, but that the European envoy also described as "extremely important" to both Amman and Brussels.

Pledging that the EU will do its utmost to "ensure that Jordan's interests are taken into account" in the final status talks, Moratinos said the two Jordanian-EU groups on water and refugees will hold "emergency meetings" by the end of next month to set common criteria among experts from both sides.

Among other issues, the joint group on water will dis-

cuss Israeli proposals to identify additional water resources, he added.

Though stressing that it does not intend to challenge Palestinian positions, nor negotiate in place of the Palestinians, Jordan has made it clear on many occasions that most of its vital and strategic interests will also be at stake in the final status talks. The Kingdom has recently stepped up its diplomatic efforts to ensure international backing on the need that it be consulted on the permanent settlement of water, refugees, and border issues, as well as the final status of the

Holy City of Jerusalem.

On its part, Europe does not want to be left out, either.

"We do not want to do only cheque-book diplomacy," Moratinos affirmed.

"The EU wants to be a player, not only a payer," he told reporters, noting that the Palestinians are the largest recipients of European per capita aid.

Europe, which will launch its single currency Jan. 1, must no longer be perceived as an external factor in the region, he stressed.

(Continued on page 12)

Iraq turns away inspectors, Washington 'prepared to act'

BAGHDAD (AFP) — Iraq turned away U.N. arms experts from offices of its ruling Baath Party on Wednesday in the first incident since the launch of intrusive inspections, the official news agency INA announced.

The U.N. Special Commission (UNSCOM) for Iraqi disarmament branded the move "clearly unacceptable" as Washington said it was "prepared to act" if Baghdad remained defiant.

Iraq said an UNSCOM team tried "to enter in a provocative way and with no notice" the offices in Baghdad.

An Iraqi official asked the chief inspector for "written details of what he was looking for..." but the team refused and left the scene," INA said.

Baghdad Radio interrupted its

programmes to carry the same statement, which quoted General Hussam Mohammad Amin, the head of the Iraqi organisation which liaises with UNSCOM.

Amin criticised UNSCOM for seeking "items linked to the elimination of weapons of mass destruction in the offices of a political party."

"It seems that such provocative actions by UNSCOM are aimed at provoking crises and problems," he said.

Witnesses said the UNSCOM inspectors arrived at the scene in four jeeps, but the doors of the offices were kept locked and the team withdrew 45 minutes later.

But "the series of inspections will continue," vowed UNSCOM's spokesman in New York, Ewen Buchanan, saying UNSCOM had

"legitimate reasons to carry out this inspection."

The United States urged Iraq to provide "full cooperation" with U.N. weapons inspectors and said: "We remain prepared to act."

"It will be important for us to hear from (UNSCOM) Chairman (Richard) Butler what he views as compliance or not compliance," said White House spokesman David Leavy.

The United States last month came within minutes of bombing Iraq because of its failure to allow inspections, but called off the strikes when Baghdad said it would resume cooperation with U.N. officials.

Butler announced Monday the start of a week of intrusive inspections as a final test of Iraqi cooperation before a sanctions review

could go ahead.

On Wednesday, more than 20 jeeps filed out of the Baghdad headquarters of UNSCOM, where spokeswoman Caroline Cross said the personnel, including visiting teams, were "just short of 200 people," well above full strength.

The teams are "undertaking our full range of activities," she told reporters.

But the Baath Party's daily warned that Butler was "seeking through these surprise visits to create a new pretext for the Americans to block the comprehensive review" of sanctions.

In the past, spot checks of sites deemed "sensitive" by Iraq, such as its defence ministry, have prompted standoffs like the latest incident in which the U.N. inspectors have been denied access.

2 Home & Middle East News

Jordan Times, Thursday-Friday, December 10-11, 1998

For 'prohibited transactions' with Iraq U.S. Treasury Department threatens fines against humanitarian group

AMMAN (J.T.) — An American humanitarian organisation that regularly transports donated medical supplies to Iraqi hospitals received a "preparatory" notice Monday from the United States Department of the Treasury, a member of the organisation said yesterday.

Voices in the Wilderness, which has sent 18 humanitarian missions to Iraq, received a notice that the treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control believes the organisation "engaged in certain prohibited transactions... relating to the embargo against Iraq, in 1997."

Voices in the Wilderness was established in response to increasingly frequent reports in the early 1990s that crippling economic sanctions on Iraq, imposed by the U.N. after the country's invasion of Kuwait, were responsible for a humanitarian crisis in the country. Their particular concern is for Iraqi children.

According to the latest U.N. reports, more than half a million Iraqi children have died as a direct consequence of sanctions. On average, 6,000 children a month perish, often from preventable diseases that cannot be treated due to a lack of sufficient medical care.

The organisation sends a group of volunteers to collect medicine and other priority medical supplies in the United States and deliver them to hospitals throughout Iraq as

finances and resources become available. Each volunteer travels at his or her own expense.

The Treasury Department's notice said: "The violations of the regulations and underlying statutes and Executive Orders for which this Notice is issued

up to 12 years imprisonment or a fine of \$1 million. Members of the organisation publicly acknowledge that they willingly violate the law in the interest of humanitarian concerns.

Additionally, OFAC has issued a claim against individ-

group urged U.N. Special Commission members to resign from their posts as an act of conscience to protest the sanctions regime.

"The work of disarmament is important, yet we believe UNSCOM's efforts are being used to justify the continuation of crippling sanctions and possible military strikes," they said in a letter to senior UNSCOM officials. "There are deep divisions within the Clinton administration over the use of military force in Iraq. The resignation of one or more UNSCOM members would greatly strengthen the hand of those who advocate a diplomatic solution to this conflict."

Although no members of the group have been arrested, one reported that her passport was confiscated, and another claimed that authorities confiscated a series of photographs of ill children and a hospital conditions, along with footage recorded by CNN of a Voices press conference when he arrived in Detroit. The confiscation of such material, they say, raises serious freedom of speech and information issues in the U.S., as any photos and documentation "imported" from Iraq is intended by the group solely to educate Americans on the devastation on children wrought by "U.S.-U.N." sanctions.

The organisation has 30 days to respond to the Treasury Department's allegations.

'The violations... concern exportation of donated goods, including medical supplies and toys, to Iraq'

concern [Voices in the Wilderness] exportation of donated goods, including medical supplies and toys, to Iraq absent specific prior authorisation by OFAC and transactions relating to travel to Iraq and activities in Iraq.

"Additionally, the violations involve transactions for the purpose of, or which have the effect of, evading or avoiding, or which facilitate the evasion or avoidance of any of the prohibitions of the [Iraqi Sanctions Regulations, 31, CFR Part 575]."

The OFAC cited the Voices' violations as being the export of goods including medical supplies valued at a total of approximately \$71,000.

The claim against the organisation is seeking a fine of \$120,000.

According to U.S. federal law, violations of sanctions regulations are punishable by

ual members of the group for a variety of violations which include the export of film and videotape from Iraq through Jordan; travel-related currency transactions that include the "purchase of food, lodging, ground transportation and incidentals"; the import of goods and services into the U.S. through Detroit, including "an Iraqi water bottle label, and Iraqi stamp, photographic film, video and audio tapes and/or cassettes, postcards and assorted papers... a wooden drum, a necklace, audio tapes, a computer disc, notebooks, pictures and miscellaneous papers and cards."

Claims against individual members range from \$10,000 to \$22,000.

During their latest visit — at the height of the latest standoff between the U.N. and Iraq over weapons inspections in November — members of the



LIFE GOES ON: Iraqis prepare meat kebabs Wednesday in a Baghdad open market. Iraq accused U.N. weapons inspectors of trying to create a new crisis yesterday when the inspectors tried to carry out a "provocative" inspection at a building in Baghdad belonging to the ruling Baath Party (Reuters photo)

Kuwaiti academic slams Gulf leaders as undemocratic

DUBAI (AFP) — A leading Kuwaiti academic slammed the Gulf summit in Abu Dhabi on Wednesday and branded the region as undemocratic in its politics and economics, in an unprecedented public attack on its ruling families.

"We need a comprehensive restructuring of political power in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states," said Abdullah Al-Nafisi, professor of political science at Kuwait University.

Speaking on Qatar's satellite TV channel Al Jazeera, the former MP said: "The GCC's statute completely ignores political freedom through popular participation."

He also condemned "the imprisonment of all people who dare express a political opinion, in most GCC countries."

He denounced the "accumulation of political and economic power which characterises the ruling families in the Gulf... This power is the principal obstacle to a common market or unified customs duties."

Nafisi said there was "an absence of a common political strategy among the Gulf states towards Israel." There are Israeli trade offices in both Oman and Qatar.

Israeli court nixes army exemptions for religious Jews

TEL AVIV (AFP) — Israel's supreme court ruled Wednesday that a 50-year-old practice of exempting religious Jews from military service was illegal, handing a highly symbolic victory to the country's secular majority.

An unusually large 11-judge high court panel agreed with petitions submitted by leftist members of parliament, army reservists and an organisation of secular students challenging the practice of allowing men enrolled in religious seminaries to evade compulsory military service.

In its unanimous ruling, the justices — who included two observant Jews — ruled that the exemptions have no basis in law and gave parliament one year to codify the practice.

They suggested a new law to set limits on the number of men allowed to avoid army service each year and warned that if some form of legislation is not passed, the court will order a halt to the exemptions.

"This is not simply an ideological problem but a military one," the justices said in the ruling.

Ultra-Orthodox leaders

responded furiously.

Deputy Housing Minister Meir Porush of the United Torah Judaism Party branded the court decision "democratic Khoreinism," a reference to the late spiritual leader of Iran's Islamic revolution.

The exemptions have been accorded under a "status quo" understanding reached between the state and religious authorities shortly after the creation of Israel in 1948.

Initially the practice involved just several hundred men, but in recent years the figure has reached about 3,000 potential

recruits annually.

And since seminary studies can last a lifetime for the most religious, the exemptions currently affect some 30,000 men including older Israelis who would normally have to serve annual periods in the army reserves until the age of 49.

At the age of 18, Israeli men are required to serve three years in the military while women must enlist for 19 months. Following their regular tour, men must serve one month in the army reserves each year until the age of 49.

The exemptions granted to

religious Jews have long irritated

the secular majority in Israel. But their frustration has grown sharply in recent years as ultra-Orthodox political parties have gained in strength and entered national and local government, funneling increasing amounts of tax monies into their religious and social institutions.

An attempt by the opposition Labour Party in July to pass legislation ending the exemptions for religious youths was defeated by the ruling coalition of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

U.S. Jews urge Clinton to oppose proclamation of Palestinian state

NEW YORK (AFP) — A key U.S. Jewish pressure group urged President Bill Clinton Tuesday to oppose a Palestinian declaration of statehood during his visit to Gaza next week.

"America must unequivocally convey to Palestinian leaders the counter-productiveness of their per-

sistent threats to proclaim a Palestinian state on May 4, 1999," the American Jewish Committee (AJC), one of the most important U.S. Jewish groups, said in a letter to Clinton, published Tuesday.

Israel has made it a condition of its troop withdrawals from the West Bank that Palestinian leaders aban-

don the declaration.

The United States has also stated its opposition to a unilateral declaration of statehood.

In a strongly-worded letter, the AJC also called on Clinton to hold the Palestinian leadership accountable for acts of violence "within its jurisdiction or undertaken by its

representatives."

And it insisted that the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) should amend its charter "to exclude the references inconsistent with Israeli-Palestinian pledges" made during talks at Oslo in 1993 and incorporated in the Wye River accord.

NEWS IN BRIEF

U.S. to fund \$241,000 water efficiency study

AMMAN (J.T.) — United States Ambassador to Jordan William Burns and Samih Madani, managing director of the Jordan Phosphates Mining Company, Wednesday signed a \$241,000 grant agreement aimed at conserving scarce water resources and increasing water recovery efficiency in the production of phosphates in Jordan, a U.S. embassy statement said. The grant is being provided by the United States Trade Development Agency (TDA), a U.S. government agency that provides funding for feasibility studies and orientation visits that support the economic needs and priorities of countries around the world. The grant will study the feasibility of using new dewatering and water reclamation technologies to reduce the amount of water needed to extract phosphates from the JPMC's Shidiya mine. If proven feasible, the use of these technologies at the Shidiya mine could improve the efficiency of water use there, the statement added. Since 1997, the United States has provided over \$2 million in TDA grants for projects in Jordan.

U.S. economic representative office opens in Amman

AMMAN (J.T.) — Seven U.S. states have opened a representative office in Jordan to strengthen economic, trade and business ties with the Kingdom, the Global Development Forum said Wednesday. The American States Offices Association Representative Offices will assist Jordanian and American exporters and importers and facilitate their business by helping forge "right partnerships and promoting better understanding of both markets," it added. The Amman-based GDF, part of a U.S.-based non-governmental organisation seeking to promote socio-economic development, signed an agreement with the American States Offices to act as their representative office in Jordan and to facilitate their business. It will represent the states of Utah, Pennsylvania, Georgia, Ohio, North Carolina, Massachusetts and Maryland. Franz Kolb, deputy director of the State of Utah Investment Business Development Office, who led a delegation to Jordan for the signing of the agreement, hailed the move. "The group sees Jordan as one stepping stone to the region and wants to position itself here for enhanced economic ties with the area," he said.

JORDAN TELEVISION Tel. 4773111-19 PROGRAMME TWO Thursday Programmes

15:10 Cartoon — Superman
15:30 Science fiction — Space
16:30 Science Show
17:00 French Programme
18:15 Drama — Sparks
19:00 Le Journal
19:15 French Programme
19:30 News Headlines
19:35 Comedy — Family Matters
20:00 Museums of the World
20:30 Drama — Dr. Quinn the
Medicine Woman
21:10 Oprah Winfrey Show
22:00 News in English
22:30 Feature film — "Max"
23:59 Comedy — Dady
00:30 End of T.J.

Friday Programmes
15:10 Cartoon — The Hunch-
back of Notre Dame
15:30 Treasure Hunt
16:30 Feature film
18:00 The Simpsons
19:00 Le Journal
19:15 French Programme
19:30 News Headlines
19:35 Comedy — The Fresh
Prince of Bel-Air
20:00 Cinema, Cinema
20:30 Drama — Horizon
21:15 Doc. — Ancient Voices
22:00 News in English
22:30 Drama — The X-Files
23:10 Drama — The Halifax
23:59 End of T.J.

PRAYER TIMES
04:58 Fair
06:20 (Sunrise) Doha
11:28 Dhufu

JORDAN TIMES DAILY GUIDE AND CALENDAR

14:14 'Asr
16:37 Maghreb
17:59 'Isha

CHURCHES

St. Mary of Nazareth Church
Swiffield, Tel. 5920740
Assemblies of God Church Tel.
4632785
St. Joseph Church Tel. 4634590
Terra Sancta Church Tel. 4622366
Anglican Church Tel.
4624853/4624811
St. Afrem Syrian Orthodox
Church Tel. 4771751
Amman International Church
Tel. 5865897
German-speaking Evangelical
Congregation Tel. 5688404
The Evangelical Local Church
in Amman Tel. 5811295
Church of Jesus Christ of Lat-
ter Day Saints Tel. 4654932
St. John the Baptist at De la
Salle College Tel. 5661757
Church of the Annunciation
Tel. 4637440
Greek Orthodox Church Tel.
4646138
Church of Presentation, Swif-
field Tel. 5920146
The Uniate Catholic Church
Tel. 4624757
The English-Language
Catholic Parish Tel. 4614190
Evangelical Free Church Tel.
4892679
The Baptist Church Tel.
4628052
The Armenian Catholic
Church Tel. 4771331
The Armenian Orthodox
Church Tel. 4775261
WEATHER

Bulletin supplied by the Depart-
ment of Meteorology
A cold air mass will affect the
Kingdom today. It will cold
with a sharp drop of tempera-
tures and skies cloudy to partly
cloudy. Showers are expected
in the northern parts of the
Kingdom gradually extending
to all other regions, and winds
westerly to northwesterly
active. On Friday, it will cold
with skies partly cloudy. In
Agaba, skies will be partly
cloudy with occasional show-
ers, winds westerly active and
seas calm.

Amman 12/15
Agaba 17/23
Deserts 10/17
Jordan Valley 17/22
Yesterday's high temperatures:
Amman 26, Agaba 28
Humidity readings: Amman
30 per cent, Agaba 44 per
cent.

Following are the tempera-
tures expected today in the fol-
lowing areas:
Ajloun 10/13
Jerash 11/16
Um Qays 11/16
Madaba 12/15
Petra 12/17
Dead Sea 15/23

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS NIGHT DUTY

WEATHER

AMMAN:
Dr. Mukhlis Mazahra 5150312
Dr. Abdul Hadi Tayyem 4620115
Dr. Wisam Hwayyin 474853
Dr. Hasm Hazzoun 5153776

AMMAN:
Firas Pharmacy 5661912
Al Salam Pharmacy 4636730
Mayadah Pharmacy 5537004
Rukn Al Dawa Pharmacy 5536169

IRBID:
Dr. Ghazi Ta'ameh (02)250080
Fou'ad Pharmacy (02)275360

ZARQA:
Dr. Salah Saffarini (09)987565
Palestine Pharmacy (09)983562

EMERGENCIES

Food Control Centre 4637111
Civil Defence Department 5661116
Civil Defence Immediate Res-
cue 4630341
Civil Defence Emergency 199
Rescue Police 192, 4621111, 4637777
Fire Brigade 4617101
Blood Bank 4775121
Highway Police 5343402
Traffic police 4896390
Public Security Dept. 4630321
Hotel Complaints 5605800
Price Complaints 5661176
Water & Sewage Complaints 489467
Amman Municipality Com-
plaints 4787111
Telephone Information (directo-
ry assistance) 121
Overseas Calls 0132
Central Amman Telephone Repairs
..... 4633101
Abdali Tel. Repairs 5661101
Jordan Television 4773111

Radio Jordan 4774111
Water Authority 5680100
J. Electricity Authority 5815615
Electric Power Co. 4636381
RJ Flight Information 44-53200
Queen Alia Intl. Airport 44-53200

HOSPITALS

AMMAN:
The Arab Centre for Heart and
Special Surgery 5921199
The Islamic Abdl 5666131/7
Hussein Medical Centre 5856856
Luzmila 4630195
Khalidi Maternity 4642816
Akileh Maternity 4642412
Jabal Amman Maternity 4642362
Malhas, J. Amman 4636360
Palestine, Shmeisani 5607071
Shmeisani Hospital 5607431
Jordan Hospital 5607550
University Hospital 5353444
Al-Muasher Hospital 5667277
Al-Ahli, Abdali 56641646
Italian, Al-Muhajreen 4777101/3
Al-Bashir 4775111/26
Army, Marka 4891611/5
Queen Alia Hospital 5157100
Amal Hospital 5607155
Al Amal Cancer Centre 5553000

ZARQA:
Zarqa Govt. Hospital (09)983323
Zarqa National Hospital (09)900560
Ibn Sina Hospital (09)986731
Al Hikma Modern Hospital
..... (09)990990

IRBID:
Princess Basma Hospital (02)275555
Roman Catholic Hospital (02)27275
Ibn Al Nafes Hospital
(02)7101372, (02)7103101
Rosary Sisters Hospital

(02)7102831, (02)7102011

Specialty Hospital (02)7103100

AQABA:
Princess Haya Hospital (03)2014111

FOR THE TRAVELLER
QUEEN ALIA
INTERNATIONAL
AIRPORT

This information is supplied by
Royal Jordanian (RJ) information
department at the Queen Alia
International Airport Tel.
(44)53200-5, where it should
always be verified. Information on
other flights can be supplied on
phone 44 (52700). Information on
Royal Wings flights can be sup-
plied on phone 4875201-5

14:05 Rome (AZ)
14:10 Sharjah (AH)
14:45 Doha (QR)
15:55 Dubai (EK)
17:25 Muscat, Dubai (GF)
18:40 Beirut (ME)
19:05 Paris (AF)
20:25 Tel Aviv (LY)
20:40 Cairo (MS)
23:10 Istanbul (TK)
00:25 Moscow (SU)
01:15 Amsterdam (KL)
04:10 London (BA)

Royal Wings (RW) Flights
For Thursday
09:30 Agaba (arriving at QAIA)
(RW)
10:10 Agaba (arriving at Marka
Airport) (RW)
16:00 Agaba (arriving at Marka
Airport) (RW)
22:50 Agaba (arriving at Marka
Airport) (RW)
00:15 Tel Aviv (arriving at
QAIA) (RW)

Other Flights
06:35 Damascus, London (BA)
07:10 Frankfurt (LH)
14:45 Riyadh (SV)
15:00 Annabab, Algiers (AF)
15:30 Rome (AZ)
15:35 Doha (EK)
17:00 Damascus, Dubai (QR)
18:15 Abu Dhabi, Muscat (GF)
20:00 Beirut (ME)
21:10 Tel Aviv (LY)
21:40 Cairo (MS)
01:55 Moscow (SU)
02:15 Amsterdam (KL)
04:45 Alexandria (BA)

Royal Wings (RW) Flights
For Thursday
07:00 Agaba (from Marka Air-
port) (RW)
08:30 Agaba (from Marka Air-
port) (RW)
20:30 Agaba (from QAIA) (RW)
22:00 Tel Aviv (from QAIA)
(RW)

For Friday
07:00 Agaba (from Marka Air-
port) (RW)
08:30 Agaba (from Marka Air-
port) (RW)
16:30 Tel Aviv (from Marka Air-
port) (RW)
20:30 Agaba (from QAIA) (RW)

DEPARTURES
Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights
06:30 Beirut (RJ)
09:00 Tel Aviv (add) (RJ)

Other Flights
13:15 Riyadh (SV)

Home

Kuwaiti academic slams Gulf leaders as undemocratic

DUBAI (AFP) — A leading Kuwaiti academic slammed the Gulf summit in Abu Dhabi on Wednesday and branded the region as undemocratic in its politics and economics, in an unprecedented public attack on its ruling families.

"We need a comprehensive restructuring of political power in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states," said Abdullah Al-Nafisi, professor of political science at Kuwait University.

Speaking on Qatar's satellite TV channel Al Jazeera, the former MP said: "The GCC's statute completely ignores political freedom through popular participation."

He also condemned "the imprisonment of all people who dare express a political opinion, in most GCC countries."

He denounced the "accumulation of political and economic power which characterises the ruling families in the Gulf... This power is the principal obstacle to a common market or unified customs duties."

Nafisi said there was "an absence of a common political strategy among the Gulf states towards Israel." There are Israeli trade offices in both Oman and Qatar.

NEWS IN

Princess Samia deliv-

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REGENT VISITS ITALIAN HOSPITAL: His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan, the Regent, Wednesday conferred upon Sister Adele Brambilla on behalf of His Majesty King Hussein the Jordanian Independence Medal of the First Order in recognition of her services during a visit to the Italian Hospital. The Regent expressed the King's appreciation of the sister's humanitarian services at the hospital over the past 15 years and congratulated her on being elected as World Mother General Superior of the Order of Combonian Sisters. Sister Adele, who had to date served as regional mother superior of the order, will soon leave for Rome to assume her new post. The Regent toured the hospital's sections and met with the staff and patients. The hospital was built in Amman during the reign of the Kingdom's founder, King Abdullah Ben Al Hussein, in 1926 and has a branch in the southern city of Karak. Both hospitals are managed by the Combonian Sisters (Photo by Boghos)

NEWS IN BRIEF

Princess Sarvath delivers address on Islam

WASHINGTON (Petra) — Her Royal Highness Princess Sarvath has delivered a speech at the American Enterprise Institute in which she addressed the stand of Islam on issues like women, education and minorities. Princess Sarvath urged an end to misconception about Islam, which, she said, has fallen prey to much disinformation and sheer ignorance of what the religion really stands for. Islam is "a liberating religion which believes in the dignity of each human soul irrespective of race, gender or creed" and affirms that all people are equal, Princess Sarvath said. Princess Sarvath stressed that Islam is a religion of tolerance that believes in peaceful coexistence, and describes "Muslims, Christians and Jews as people of the book, all sharing the revelation of the one God and all worthy of respect."

Ministry examines plan for needy, orphans

AMMAN (Petra) — The Education Ministry's Planning Committee Wednesday discussed a plan to provide financial assistance to needy and orphaned students in the Kingdom. In its meeting, headed by Minister of Social Development and acting Education Minister Mohammad Khair Mamsar, the committee reviewed suitable regulations and procedures to reach targeted students and ensure that assistance is distributed. Mamsar called on all governmental and voluntary organizations to develop an integrated approach to achieve the plan's goals. Also Thursday, Mamsar and the Islamic Relief Committee signed an agreement under which the committee will provide social, financial and in-kind assistance to orphans and the disabled. A joint three-member higher committee will be set up to supervise the services.

Amman meets with Egyptian minister

AMMAN (Petra) — Planning Minister Nabil Amman Wednesday received his Egyptian counterpart Thamer Bashri for talks on several bilateral issues. During the meeting, both Amman and Bashri, who headed a preparatory committee for the Jordanian-Egyptian Higher Joint Committee, which will open its meeting in Amman on Thursday, stressed the importance of involving the private sector in economic and social development. A number of senior officials from the two sides attended the meeting.

what's going on

FILMS
 * Spanish musical film "La verbena de la Paloma" at Instituto Cervantes, Jabbal Amman on Thursday at 5:00 p.m.
 * "Computer Art by New York-based Palestinian Artist Samia Halaby" at Durr Al Fuman, Jabbal Weidoh on Thursday at 5:30 p.m.
 * "The Christmas Box" at the American Center, Abdoun on Thursday at 5:00 p.m.
CONCERT
 * Musical performance by the Gaede Trio (with Hamburg violinist Daniel Gaede, solo musician Thomas Seiditz, and cellist Andreas Greger to play pieces by Beethoven, Rousset, and Schubert) at the Royal Cultural Centre on Thursday at 8:00 p.m.
ANNUAL CHOIR
 * Annual Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA) choir at the Royal Cultural Centre on Thursday at 8:00 p.m.
EUROPEAN FILM FESTIVAL
 * German film "Nacht und Tag in Urwald" on Friday at 5:00 p.m.
 * Greek film "Hades" on Friday at 8:00 p.m. (to be shown again on Saturday Dec. 12 at 5:00 p.m.)
 * Spanish film "El Maestro de Esgrima" on Saturday Dec. 12 at 8:00 p.m.
 All films, with subtitles in English, are screened at the Royal Cultural Centre.
SEMINAR
 * Seminar marking the 50th anniversary of the International Declaration of Human Rights at the Royal Cultural Centre on Thursday at 5:00 p.m.
EXHIBITIONS
 * Display of posters marking the anniversary of the International Declaration of Human Rights at the Greater Amman Municipality city hall, Ras Al Ain, until Dec. 17.
 * "The Warm Winter" — works by several artists at Orfali Art Gallery, Um Uthman (Tel. 5526932), until Feb. 1.
 * United Nations exhibition on human rights related activities at the Royal Cultural Centre, until Dec. 10 (Artist Dourade Lahzani. UNICEF special ambassador for child rights in Syria, will visit the exhibition on Thursday morning Dec. 10).
 * Photography exhibition "Empreintes" (a photography trip from Morocco to Turkey) at the French Cultural Centre, Jabbal Amman, until Dec. 17.
 * Works of 17 British artists and painters from the Nineteenth Century at the British Council, Jabbal Amman, until Dec. 10.
 * Oil paintings by Ali Najjar at Instituto Cervantes, Jabbal Amman, until Dec. 14.
 * The Tenth Anniversary Exhibition of Contemporary Arab Artists at Durr Al Fuman, Jabbal Weidoh (Tel. 4643251/2, until Jan. 28).
 * Photography exhibition entitled "Windows and Doors" by Hani Hourani at Baladna Art Gallery, Gardens Street (Tel. 5537598), until Dec. 18.

Government begins procedures to sell land to squatters

ZARQA (Petra) — The Department of Lands and Survey has started survey and land-allotment procedures in the Zarqa and Ruseifa regions as part of a process to allow citizens who built on state-owned lands to pay for them by instalment.

Zarqa Governor Abdul Samir Kharabsheh said the government has decided to allow squatters who built homes on state land to take ownership of the land in exchange for payment that can be spread over four years.

The total area in question is estimated at 21,000 dunums, which according

to Kharabsheh will bring about JD5 million into the state's treasury when sold.

Abul Munem Samara, director of the Lands and Survey Department, said that once the survey and allotment procedures have been completed, the issue of squatters building illegally on state-owned land will come to an end.

Once the property deeds have been issued, said Samara, the owners will have to pay dues to local municipal councils in accordance with the relevant regulations to enable the local authorities to provide water supplies and electricity to their homes.

Seminar examines right of physically challenged to marriage, family life

By Munther Murjan

AMMAN — Handicapped Jordanians have the right to marry and raise families both with other disabled partners and with able-bodied members of society, lawyers, sociologists and doctors said at a recent seminar.

However, some doctors argued that those suffering from mental disabilities, severe retardation, semi-paralysis, especially paralysis affecting the sexual organs, and males suffering from Down's syndrome should not be encouraged to tie the knot.

Others insisted that disabled couples undergo pre-marital medical exams to determine any possible genetic diseases and protect their children from health problems.

In 1994, the Health Ministry made it obligatory for all couples planning to get married to have pre-marital medical exams. But if left up to the couples to decide if they want to pursue their plans if genetic diseases are detected — a policy that has helped keep such tests largely ignored.

Speakers at Saturday's seminar said the Constitution gives all Jordanians, including the physically challenged, the right to get married and to have families on the condition that they safeguard the health of their children.

"The handicapped are part of society, and it is important for society to know that they enjoy the same rights as able citizens," said Sami Hirzallah, head of the Mustaqbal Club for the physically handicapped.

"They have the right to

have families, to have marital and sexual counselling, and handicapped women have... the right to be mothers," he said.

Other lawyers said marriages should not be limited only to able-bodied members of society.

"I believe that limiting marriages among the disabled or among the able-bodied can have a negative impact on the development of society," said lawyer Khalil Fa'ouri. "It also contradicts all principles of human rights."

"The handicapped Jordanian has the right to enjoy a decent life and to be part of social life, including getting married and raising a family, as long as he/she takes precautions to ensure their children will be healthy," added lawyer Saleh Wazani.

Legal clauses have been introduced to ensure that Jordanians suffering from insanity and mental retardation can only tie the knot with the approval of a judge following a medical report proving that he/she can benefit from marriage.

In a country of 4.2 million people, Jordan has over 200,000 citizens suffering from various types of disabilities.

This, doctors and social workers say, is placing a huge financial strain on the country's limited health, social welfare and education infrastructure, costing it millions of dinars in treatment of mostly genetically-linked disabilities.

Social workers blame the relatively high figures of disabled Jordanians on poverty, social ignorance, accidents and consanguineous marriages — a widespread traditional practice in Jordan.

Israel denies official's call to review water deals with Jordan — Khatib

By Ahmad Khatib

AMMAN — Israel has distanced itself from a recent statement made by one of its ministers that it should reconsider water agreements signed with Jordan and the Palestinian National Authority, a senior official said Wednesday.

Foreign Minister Abdul Ilah Khatib said Israel denied recent statements attributed to Agriculture Minister Rafael Eitan, who heads the right-wing Tsomet Party, that his country should re-examine water deals signed with the

Kingdom and the Palestinians, and said the announcement "does not represent the official Israeli stand, but [rather] the minister's personal point of view."

In reply to a related question by Deputy Amjad Majali during yesterday's Parliament session, Khatib said Jordan protested through the embassy in Tel Aviv to the Israeli Foreign Ministry demanding a clarification of Eitan's statement, which Khatib described as "strange, because it contradicted all agreements signed between the two countries."

The peace treaty with Israel,

signed in October 1994, guaranteed an additional 215 million cubic metres of water a year through new dams, a treatment plant and diversion projects.

Under the treaty, Jordan is currently storing winter water in Lake Tiberias which it reclaims in the summer. But of the total 215 million cubic metres promised, Jordan is currently receiving only about 60 million cubic metres.

Last month, Jordan and Israel began construction on a JD1.65 million diversion dam to more effectively utilise 40 million cubic metres of the

Yarmouk River's overflow per year and regulate year-round inflow of water to the 110-kilometre-long King Abdullah Canal.

The Yarmouk currently provides the Kingdom with only 135mcm of its 220mcm full share, set by an Arab League committee in 1987.

Jordan's population, increasing by 3.5 per cent annually, will need 1.2 billion cubic metres of water per year between 1998 and 2000. But the Kingdom's current water resources only amount to 960 million cubic metres a year, according to official figures.

Egyptian PM arrives today for higher joint committee meeting

AMMAN (Petra) — Egyptian Prime Minister Kamal Jazouli is due in Jordan on Thursday for a two-day official visit during which he will co-chair a meeting of the Jordanian-Egyptian Higher Joint Committee with Prime Minister Fayez Tarawneh.

The higher committee, which will open its meeting at the Prime Ministry with the participation of concerned ministers, is scheduled to sign 13 agreements and protocols.

The agreements were prepared for the higher committee

by a bilateral ministerial committee which concluded two days of deliberations on Wednesday and prepared the agenda for Thursday's meeting.

Minister of Industry and Trade Mohammad Saleh Hourani and Egyptian Minister of Planning and International Cooperation Thamer Bashri chaired the preparatory meeting.

In remarks at a ceremony held to sign the minutes of the preparatory committee's meeting, both ministers pointed out

that despite the recent efforts to boost bilateral trade, exchanges between the two countries have not met expectations. They expressed hope that Jordan and Egypt would witness increased trade exchanges and the creation of a free trade zone in the near future.

Hourani pointed out that the two countries were also aiming to adjust the balance of trade, noting that last year Jordan imported JD275 million worth of Egyptian products and exported only JD14.5 million worth of Jordanian goods.

For his part, Bashri said trade between Egypt and Jordan cannot grow unless joint investments are made. He noted that the two countries have so far carried out 117 joint projects that cost four billion Egyptian pounds.

An agreement on the creation of a free trade zone due to be signed Thursday provides for gradual exemptions of customs duties on trade exchanges starting from January 1999 and until the year 2005, when all goods will be totally exempt from customs duties.

Government pledges to improve prison's conditions following calls for closure

By Fairouz Abu-Ghazaleh

AMMAN — The government Wednesday promised deputies to improve conditions at the desolate Jafr Correctional and Rehabilitation Centre after many lawmakers called for its permanent closure on the grounds that it was unfit to house prisoners.

"The prison is ancient, its kitchen is run down and the food offered to its 91 inmates

is so appalling that even animals would not eat it," Mohammad Azaideh, head of the Lower House of Parliament's Public Freedoms Committee, told the 80-seat House after visiting the centre.

"It is enough that these prisoners are being punished. We should not add to that by exiling them to this jail," Azaideh added.

Interior Minister Nayef Qadi said the government

would do its utmost to improve living conditions at the jail and added that he had asked Public Works and Transport Minister Nasser Lawzi recently to refurbish the facility, including its kitchen.

"I am aware that the situation at Jafr centre is bad, and Mr. Lawzi has promised to give priority to long-due renovations..." Qadi said.

Jafr, a high-security prison

that housed political dissidents in the 1950s and 1960s, is located 300 kilometres southeast of Amman.

Qadi also said he had asked Lawzi to provide transportation to the jail for families and relatives of inmates to allow them to make visits once or twice a week.

Families of Jafr inmates have complained to Azaideh that they could not afford to make the trips.



CHILDREN PERFORM A TRADITIONAL DANCE: Girls perform a traditional dance Wednesday in Amman. The Jordan office of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) released its annual survey on girl's education in the Kingdom and noted both areas of achievement and room for improvement in Jordan (Reuters photo)

Little progress seen on human rights in most of Asia

HONG KONG (AFP) — Asia marks the 50th anniversary of the Declaration of Human Rights Thursday, but activists say there is little cause for cheer with the situation in some nations taking a turn for the worse.

Although most countries are signatories to the United Nations key covenants on human rights, international observers say there has been little progress over the past year, with abuses of religious, social and political freedoms still widespread.

"Across the world, and specifically in the Asian region, this is not the time for celebration," said Indian rights activists Ravi Nair.

"It is a time for introspection. While awareness about human rights has certainly risen, incidents of rights abuses have not shown a declining trend," he said.

China remains one of the world's black spots for human rights abuses, with a continuing crackdown on Tibetan Buddhism, separatists in Xinjiang province, religious groups and political dissidents.

A succession of Western leaders have addressed the issue with the Chinese government during visits to Beijing this year, and although they claim there has been some improvement, the country has a long way to go.

"There is no disguising that we continue to have serious concerns and differences about human rights — about political and religious freedoms and about the situation in Tibet," British Prime Minister Tony Blair said dur-

ing his October trip.

Rights groups also say the recent arrest of dissidents trying to set up a new political party bodes ill for political freedom in China.

After an initial flurry of hope for improved rights in Indonesia following the downfall of former president Suharto, a recent report by the London-based Amnesty International accused President B.J. Habibie of using repressive measures similar to those of his predecessor.

Amnesty pinpointed the shooting and killing of unarmed student protesters in Jakarta, as well as killings, disappearances and arrests in the troubled provinces of Irian Jaya, Aceh and East Timor.

It also expressed concern over the questioning of 18 politicians on suspicion of subversion for signing a document saying that did not accept the outcome of a special People's Consultative Assembly session.

In Malaysia, which has not ratified the two key U.N. covenants on human rights, monitors have noticed the rising use of police and the draconian Internal Security Act to quash political dissent.

Opposition leader Lim Kit Siang said that "1998 is shaping up to be a very black year for human rights and the rule of law for Malaysia."

Amnesty, which has urged Kuala Lumpur to ratify the covenants as soon as possible, also pointed to the treatment of former deputy prime minister Anwar Ibrahim as a cause for concern.

Anwar is on trial on charges

of corruption and sodomy after being ousted from his post in September. He has pleaded not guilty on all counts, and on his first appearance in court was seen bearing a black eye and bruises.

Myanmar also continues to be a global human rights hotspot.

The U.N. General Assembly's human rights commission last month sharply criticised the military junta and urged it to hold urgent talks with the opposition.

The resolution deplores the continuing violations of human rights in Myanmar including extrajudicial and arbitrary executions, rape, torture, inhuman treatment, mass arrests, forced labour and forced relocation, it said.

Rights groups in India, which was one of the first countries to sign the declaration in 1948, say abuses are still widespread.

But the Philippines has seen strong progress in the protection of rights since the ousting of former dictator Ferdinand Marcos, and Thailand was recently given a broadly positive assessment by the U.S. State Department.

Vietnam won praise for the release of several key dissidents, although it later tarnished its image by refusing a U.N. inspector on religious tolerance access to several detainees.

"The biggest problems are the lack of freedom of expression, freedom of organisation and freedom of religion," a European diplomat said.



Russian Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov (left) laughs with NATO Secretary General Javier Solana at the end of a news conference at NATO headquarters in Brussels. NATO invited Russia to a top-level meeting at the Western alliance's 50th anniversary summit in Washington next April, in a bid to cement a new partnership with its former cold war enemy (Reuters photo)

Albright urges Russia to attend NATO summit

BRUSSELS, Belgium (R) — U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright Wednesday invited a reluctant Russia to NATO's 50th birthday party next year.

An anniversary summit of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation in Washington next April is designed to define the alliance's mission and strategic vision into the 21st century.

"Our purpose will be to make sure that NATO is equipped to make maximum contribution to peace and democracy throughout the Euro-Atlantic region (and one way to do that is by ensuring the alliance) works as closely as possible with our partners," she said.

To that end, "we invite Russia to strive with us to achieve this goal. And I invite Prime Minister (Yevgeny) Primakov or Foreign Minister (Igor) Ivanov to join us in Washington for those meetings," Albright said.

U.S. officials said Russia has been reluctant to attend the summit, fearing the meeting would celebrate NATO's view that it won the cold war, an assessment many Russians reject.

Albright, speaking in Brussels, also assured Moscow that the western alliance would not seek to use new negotiations on a 10-year-old treaty limiting conventional forces in Europe to gain military advantage.

She was addressing a meeting of the NATO-Russia joint partnership council, established to assuage Moscow's concerns over alliance plans to expand into Eastern Europe.

It was the first such meeting attended by Ivanov, and Albright declared him a "worthy successor" to Primakov, who is now prime minister.

Albright, in making her pitch to Ivanov, argued that "the new Russia and the new NATO have many interests in common," including stability in the Balkans and a concern over the proliferation of nuclear, chemical and biological weapons.

She insisted the United States wants NATO and Russia to be able to act jointly to address common challenges, such as in the Serbian province of Kosovo. Russia, despite serious reservations, acquiesced when NATO threatened air strikes if Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic did not end vio-

lent repression against ethnic Albanians.

"Looking ahead, we want to explore additional areas for cooperation. We pledge continued consultation," she added.

NATO and Russia recently agreed to complete negotiations on a new Conventional Forces in Europe (CFE) treaty in 1999. Treaty limits on tanks, artillery and other weapons were set when the Soviet Union still existed, and signatories agree the collapse of the Communist bloc and expansion of NATO require revisions.

"NATO is not seeking to use this CFE negotiation to gain military advantage. Rather, we are seeking a balanced treaty that benefits all," Albright insisted.

While the secretary of state noted "forward strides" in the NATO-Russia relationship, she was far more enthusiastic about a "sweeping and specific" programme of cooperation with the alliance proposed by Ukraine.

"It is clearly oriented toward reforming Ukraine's entire defence and foreign policy apparatus to play a greater role in the new Europe," she said, while urging Kiev to accelerate defence, economic and political reforms.

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NEWS IN BRIEF

Anwar's lawyers move to disqualify testimony of key witness in trial

KUALA LUMPUR (AFP) — Lawyers defended Malaysia's ousted Deputy Premier Anwar Ibrahim Tuesday moved Wednesday to disqualify the testimony of a key witness on the grounds that he gave contradictory evidence. "We wish to impeach the credibility of this witness," Defence Counsel Gurbachan Singh said in an application to the court, referring to former driver Azizah Abu Bakar who alleged he was repeatedly sodomised by Anwar in 1992. The defence argued that Azizah told the court Tuesday he had not read a book called "Fifty Reasons Why Anwar Cannot Become Prime Minister" which implicated the allegation of sodomy. But in a sworn statement made in August this year and submitted as evidence in the trial, Azizah said portions of the book referring to him were "totally untrue and with bad intent," Gurbachan said. "It is clear indicated that the portion of the book concerning him was referred to him by the police," he added. "The contradiction is material and obvious in any event." Monday, Azizah stunned the court when he agreed to a defence suggestion that he kept visiting Anwar's house between 1992 and 1997 because Anwar "did not sodomise you" and that Azizah would have otherwise kept "far away" if he had. Impeachment proceedings usually aim to remove contradictory testimony and statement from the court's record. It does not mean that other evidence is ruled out but the court will not attach much weight to other evidence in light of the contradictions, one lawyer said.

Swiss socialist elected president of confederation

BERN (AFP) — Socialist Ruth Dreifuss was elected Wednesday as president of the Swiss confederation, becoming the first woman in the country's history to hold the post, rotated annually among seven ministries. Dreifuss, 61, was elected by a clear majority of Swiss deputies to head the confederation. She will succeed Flavio Cotti, who is also Swiss foreign minister. The new president, who assumes her function from Jan. 1, will keep her title of interior minister.

Shanghai dissident flees to U.S. to escape crackdown

SHANGHAI (AFP) — Shanghai dissident Yao Zhenxian was to flee to the United States Wednesday to avoid arrest in the crackdown on the opposition China Democracy Party (CDP). U.S. officials promptly accepted Yao's request for travel documents after overseas members of the banned party decided he would be in danger if he stayed in the country. U.S.-based pro-democracy activist Bao Ge said in a faxed statement. The statement, which identified Yao as a member of the CDP's national committee, said he would take United Airlines flight 838 for New York, which was due to depart here at 11:10 a.m. (0310 GMT). Yao's father told AFP the dissident left for the airport at around 8:00 a.m. with his wife and daughter, who were to accompany him on the trip. A spokesman for the U.S. consulate in Shanghai refused to comment on the decision to grant Yao special U.S. entry papers. "The decision is made in Washington, it is not made here," he said, adding that according to procedures, immigration officials would decide whether to give the dissident a formal visa only after his arrival in a U.S. port of entry. Beijing launched a crackdown last week, arresting 10 members and sympathisers of the underground party including two high-profile dissidents, Xu Wenli and Qin Yongmin. Xu and Qin have been formally charged with attempted subversion, but seven others have since been released. Dissident sources said Monday that the founder of the party, Wang Youcai, would be put on trial in Hangzhou next week for incitement to overthrow the state.

Italian remanded by Australian court for extradition hearing

SYDNEY (AFP) — A man who is alleged to be one of Italy's most wanted criminals was remanded in custody pending an extradition hearing which was arranged for Feb. 15 when he appeared before a magistrate here Wednesday. Giovanni Farina, 48, was arrested for allegedly breaching currency regulations when he arrived in Australia on Aug. 15 under the name of Luigi Valiente. Italian police have identified Valiente as Farina, who is wanted in Italy on kidnapping and firearms offences. No plea was entered and bail was not sought when he appeared briefly before magistrate Allan Moore at Sydney's Central Local Court. Police alleged he failed to declare 138,000 Australian dollars (\$88,000) in foreign currency, in excess of the 5,000 Australian dollar (\$3,200) limit, escaping from lawful custody and assaulting police.

Japanese scientists clone eight calves using new technique

WASHINGTON (AFP) — Japanese scientists used the most advanced technique to date to create eight genetically identical calves, according to a report to appear in a recent issue of Science magazine. Headed by Yukio Kato of the Science and Technology Institute of Nara, Japan, the technique allowed the eight calves to be cloned from only ten ova extracted from a cow that was about to be slaughtered. By comparison, Scottish scientists needed 277 tries to create the cloned sheep "Dolly" in 1997. Four of the eight Japanese calves died shortly after their birth in June, but researchers said they were killed by "environmental causes" and not by problems stemming from the cloning operation. Scientists extracted the nuclei from ten of the donor cow's ova and replaced them with the nuclei from ten adult cells from another cow — six from outside the ovule and four from the bovine equivalent of the human Fallopian tubes. The cells were allowed to grow to their first development stage as blastocysts before being implanted in the uterus of ten surrogate cows. All of the eight calves born were identical genetic copies of the donor cow. The unprecedented, 70 per cent success rate was attributed both to the new cloning technique and to the choice of donor cells, the researchers said.

50 die in vehicle collision in India

NEW DELHI (AFP) — At least 50 people were killed when a speeding bus collided with a fuel tanker Wednesday in the eastern Indian state of Bihar, the Press Trust in India (PTI) reported. Five others were seriously injured in the accident at Bhijpur district, Bihar Director General of Police K. Jacob was quoted as saying. Jacob said there was a loud explosion after the collision, and most of the victims were burnt to death. PTI earlier reported that 15 political activists were killed in the accident and identified them as members of a centrist party ruling Bihar.

N. Irish leaders blame each other amid pressure for deal by Christmas

LONDON (AFP) — Northern Irish leaders blamed each other Wednesday for the deadlock in the peace process while British Premier Tony Blair and U.S. President Bill Clinton pushed for progress before Christmas.

"There is a serious difficulty in the peace process," said Martin McGuinness, the deputy leader of Sinn Fein, which is regarded as the political wing of the IRA.

Speaking after a meeting here with Blair, he added, however, that supporters of the peace process in Ireland hoped that the "very worrying" difficulties could be overcome before Christmas.

Sinn Fein accuses the province's Protestant loyalists of creating the deadlock. McGuinness blamed a Protestant veto which he said had prevented the establishment of committees vital to the peace process.

"Clearly there had been a veto at play here deployed by Unionists since July this year whenever an executive com-

mittee, north-south ministerial council should have been established."

The moderate Protestant Unionist leader David Trimble is widely held responsible for the deadlock, blaming the impasse on his demands that the Irish Republican Army start to disarm immediately.

The April peace accord gave both Roman Catholic and Protestant militia two years to surrender their weapons, although an immediate gesture by the IRA would allow the Ulster Unionist Party (UUP) to reassure its hard-line partisans who are still suspicious of Republicanism.

Trimble called for progress before setting out for Oslo this week to collect the Nobel Peace prize, which he won together with moderate Catholic leader John Hume. "This is not peace. We have to move forward," he said.

Clinton, who met the Protestant leader Tuesday, also called for an end to the

deadlock. He said: "Bringing these institutions alive is absolutely essential to keep up the momentum for peace, and we urge a speedy resolution."

A breakthrough seemed to be on the cards last week when Blair visited the provincial capital Belfast, but the UUP refused to accept his proposals, provoking exasperation in London.

Blair also said to meet Wednesday moderate Catholic politician Seamus Mallon, who talked Tuesday with Irish Premier Bertie Ahern. Ahern has also called for a speedy end to the deadlock.

In Northern Ireland, contradictory rumours circulated this week about the possibility that the IRA might be repairing a gesture in favour of the vexed issue of disarmament, or decommissioning as it is called.

McGuinness, however, made no comment on the matter as he emerged from his Downing Street meeting with the British prime minister.

Tuesday three km from the village of Dovydenko near the dusty town of Akhkhoy Martan.

The heads were later taken to a morgue in Grozny. Other parts of the bodies were not found.

The four men — identified by their bodyguard as Britons Darren Hickey, Rudolf Petschi and Peter Kennedy and New Zealander Stanley Shaw — were captured by unknown gunmen when they were installing a mobile phone system.

Cook said in Brussels, where he is attending a NATO ministerial conference, that he planned to discuss the killings with Ivanov Wednesday morning.

"The Russians have been

as helpful as they can be to us throughout this," Cook told Reuters Television.

"The trouble is Moscow does not have much influence with what happens in Chechnya at the present time."

The New Zealand and British ambassadors to Russia, John Larkindale and Sir Andrew Wood, were due to meet Russian Interior Minister Sergei Stepashin in Moscow, a spokesman for the New Zealand embassy said.

It was the first time foreign hostages had been murdered since the end of Chechnya's 1994-96 war with Russia.

Chechnya's national security chief said Tuesday his forces had detained a man suspected of involve-

ment in the murders and vowed to identify the murderers Wednesday. Other officials denied Tuesday that anyone had been detained.

Russian President Boris Yeltsin, British Prime Minister Tony Blair and U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan expressed shock at the murders and condemned them.

Chechen President Aslan Maskhadov blamed "foreign special forces" and their Chechen agents for the murders, which he said were intended to hinder his efforts to build relations abroad.

Granger Telecom, the British firm which employed the men, said it had been in contact with the kidnappers and had

received information last week that the hostages were alive.

"We understand from media reports today that the Chechen authorities may have mounted a rescue attempt last night. It would appear that something went tragically wrong," Granger Telecom's chief executive, Ray Verth, said Tuesday.

Chechnya has suffered from poverty and lawlessness since fighting a 21-month war of independence from Russia that ended when Moscow withdrew its troops in 1996.

Maskhadov, seen as a relative moderate in Moscow, is opposed by renegade warlords who say they want to set up a stricter Islamic state and maintain a firmer stance towards Russia.

Britain, New Zealand seek clues to Chechnya murders

GROZNY, Russia (R) — A Chechen official said Wednesday he believed kidnappers in the rebel Russian region beheaded three British hostages and one from New Zealand in panic because they feared they were about to be arrested.

Chechnya's prosecutor general, General Mansur Tagirov, offered a version of events which contradicted British media reports that the four hostages might have been killed during or after a bungled rescue operation.

British Foreign Secretary Robin Cook planned to discuss the murders with Russian Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov later Wednesday, and the British and New Zealand ambas-

sadors to Russia were expected to seek details from Russia's interior minister.

ITAR-TASS news agency quoted Tagirov as saying two criminal groups involved in the kidnapping in the Chechen capital Grozny on Oct. 3 had panicked after one of their members was detained and questioned by police.

"The two criminal groups mistrusted each other and, fearing arrest, liquidated them as witnesses," TASS said.

Chechen and Russian authorities have offered no official version of the events leading to the hostages' murder.

The hostages' severed heads were discovered in a sack on a deserted highway

Former Indonesian Pres. Suharto and his family were questioned by the anti-corruption commission on Tuesday.

Suharto

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Former Indonesian President Suharto (right) speaks to journalists at the attorney-general's office after four hours of questioning by the attorney-general over charges that he corruptly built up a fortune during his rule. Analysts allege Suharto and his family amassed a fortune worth billions of dollars during his autocratic, army-backed rule (Reuters photo)

Suharto still smiling but under pressure

JAKARTA (AFP) — Former Indonesian President Suharto was still smiling but clearly under pressure Wednesday as he submitted to a prosecutor's grilling over the alleged fortune he accumulated during his 32-year rule.

In the 202 days since he stepped down amid the country's worst economic crisis in decades, mounting demonstrations and lethal riots, the greying 77-year-old former general had obviously lost weight.

Dressed in his trademark batik shirt and black cap, he appeared calm and spoke in a strong, steady voice to a mob of journalists as he emerged.

But journalists said the wave he gave was a mere acknowledgement compared to the breezy, jocular greeting of September when he last reported to the prosecutors' office, not to answer a summons, but voluntarily.

That was before the clamour had intensified here for the one-time leader of the world's fourth most populous nation to be slapped under house arrest, and before almost daily attempts by student protesters to breach security cordons and march on his quiet central Jakarta home.

That he is fitter now than a year ago, when concerns over his health shook the stock exchange, was borne out by former Australian Prime Minister Paul Keating, a personal friend who called on him in November.

Suharto, Keating said, was exercising more and had lost weight. But, he added, Suharto had not changed in the slightest his view that the way he governed had been — and still would be — best for Indonesia.

Keating also told Australian journalists here that he did "not get the impression" that Suharto was still involved in daily politics in Indonesia, a view widely held by some diplomats and Indonesian intellectuals, who see him as the power behind his successor and protégé, B.J. Habibie.

Habibie, whose closeness to Suharto is now one of his greatest liabilities, admits to having telephoned Suharto on his birthday in June, but told AFP in an interview that Suharto himself had advised breaking off direct contact "as it might be misinterpreted."

Suharto's half-brother, and his reputedly wealthy children whose greed contributed to his downfall, say Suharto will never leave Indonesia, despite the anger mounting against him.

Say Keating and others: "He still thinks he is right." What Suharto thought was right was spelled out in his biography, "the smiling general" and a film on the bloody events of 1965 which brought him from near-anonymity as an army general to the presi-

dency. Born to a family of farmers in densely-populated central Java on June 8, 1921, Suharto joined the then-Japanese Indonesian army during World War II.

After independence he joined the fledgling Indonesian armed forces, in a career briefly marred by a corruption scandal, and was posted to Dutch New Guinea before it became a part of Indonesia as Irian Jaya.

After seizing power in the aftermath of a botched and bloody coup blamed on the Indonesian communist party, he presided over a massive blood letting which left at least half a million communists killed and millions jailed.

He banned the communist party and its teachings, assumed the presidency in 1967, and set about the task of bringing the country out of its economic doldrums.

It was his tireless efforts to build up the country's economy that earned him the title "Father of Development", and saw per capita gross domestic product jump from a mere \$50 in 1966 to \$1,000.

He made Indonesia, one of the world's largest rice importers, self-sufficient in the commodity, and drove the country's economy further away from its dependency on oil and gas exports by boosting exports of manufactured products and textiles.

But his autocratic rule, heavy reliance on the army and intolerance of any dissent, which left hundreds of political prisoners behind bars, as well as the enrichment of his cronies and children, began to take its toll.

He quelled a student uprising in 1974 and jailed one of his staunchest supporters, lieutenant general Hartono Rekso Dharsono the following decade.

Meanwhile the business tactics of his six children became cruder and cruder, and their tentacles reached into every sector of the economy as cabinet ministers were ridden over roughshod in awards of contracts.

By the time he ran for a seventh five-year term in March of 1998 — as usual the sole, unopposed candidate — student dissent was crushed only by abductions and torture, and the economy was sliding rapidly downhill, hit by the Asian monetary crisis.

By late 1997 what had started as a monetary problem had spiralled into a full-scale crisis of confidence.

Students were on the streets, the International Monetary Fund had despaired and packed its bags as Suharto refused reforms, ministers refused to join a new cabinet and finally even the armed forces told him it was time to go.

China warns Taiwan over vote

BEIJING (R) — China warned Taiwan Wednesday it was "playing with fire" after a referendum in a Taiwan city last week rejected eventual reunification.

"Attempts to use a referendum to block reunification and create 'an independent Taiwan' are a dangerous act of playing with fire," the Xinhua news agency quoted China's top Taiwan policymaking body as saying.

"We give a serious warning to various separatist forces," a spokesman for the Taiwan Affairs Office under the State Council, or cabinet, was quoted as saying.

The spokesman stopped short of repeating China's long-standing threat to invade Taiwan if the Nationalist-ruled island declared independence.

But he said if such action was not stopped, it would "endanger the safety of Taiwan compatriots and influence the peace and stability in the Asia Pacific region."

Beijing has regarded Taiwan as a rebel province since the Communists won the Chinese civil war and drove the defeated Nationalists into exile in Taiwan in 1949.

The spokesman described reunification of China and Taiwan as a "sacred historical mission."

He said the referendum in southern Tainan city last Saturday was "illegal, invalid and a futile effort."

"We express our resolute opposition," the spokesman said.

Of 124,776 voters who cast ballots in the referendum, 96,923 people, or 77.88 per cent, opposed a Taiwan ruled by Beijing. The referendum was held

alongside polls to elect parliament and the mayors of Taipei and southern Kaohsiung city.

Taiwan's election authorities have refused to accept the outcome of the referendum.

The spokesman slapped Taiwan authorities on the wrist for failing to stop the referendum, which he described as a "threat" to China.

"There is only one China in the world. Taiwan is an inseparable part of China," the spokesman said.

Tuesday, China stepped up calls for reunification talks with Taiwan following a resounding victory by the island's ruling Nationalist Party in the weekend polls.

Zhang Kehui, vice-chairman of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Congress, an advisory body to parlia-

ment, was quoted this week as saying talks on China's reunification "should not be postponed indefinitely."

The Nationalists scored a striking victory against the main opposition Democratic Progressive Party (DPP), a result seen by many analysts as a rejection of the DPP's pro-independence platform.

Incumbent Taipei Mayor Chen Shui-bian of the DPP was unseated by popular Nationalist former Justice Minister Ma Ying-jeou.

Commenting on the elections, a spokesman for the cabinet's Taiwan Affairs Office said: "We have always taken a clear stance towards political activities in Taiwan, respecting our compatriots' lifestyle and their wish and right to run their own affairs."

'Britons evenly split over Pinochet arrest'

LONDON (R) — Britons are split over whether former Chilean dictator Augusto Pinochet should be extradited to Spain to face genocide, torture and murder charges, an opinion poll showed Wednesday.

The Guardian newspaper poll offered no easy populist option to Home Secretary (Interior Minister) Jack Straw who must decide by Friday if the extradition process is to go ahead.

Thirty-four per cent said he should be extradited to Spain, 36 per cent said he should be allowed to return to Chile and the rest said they did not know.

The London Times agreed that Straw faces "the lonely vigil of a man who can't win."

The Guardian poll intriguingly mirrored the sense of indecision felt by Chileans among whom

Pinochet provokes either intense hatred or devotion after his harsh 1973-1990 rule. At least 3,000 people disappeared in which hunts against leftists.

A poll published last week in Santiago showed Chileans almost evenly split. Forty-five per cent thought his arrest was bad, 44 per cent called it good, the rest had no response.

Pinochet was arrested in London on Oct. 16 on a warrant from Spain.

Britain's House of Lords — the highest court in the land — ruled last month that he did not enjoy immunity from prosecution.

But the impartiality of the Law Lords ruling was questioned Tuesday when it emerged that one of the senior judges in the case had connections with human rights watchdog Amnesty International, which has campaigned

hard for Pinochet to be brought to justice.

Amnesty acknowledged that Lord Hoffman, who cast the deciding vote in the 3-2 ruling that Pinochet was not immune from prosecution, had been director of Amnesty International Charity Ltd for several years.

Thursday, Amnesty International marks the 50th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights by laying 3,197 white flowers on the doorstep of the Home Office.

Amnesty said the number matched Chile's official figure for people who disappeared or were killed during Pinochet's rule.

Amnesty asked Straw to commemorate the anniversary by "allowing the legal process against Pinochet to take its course without political intervention."

The pressure on Straw is

building up from both pro and anti-Pinochet camps.

Fifty opposition members of the Chilean parliament wrote to Straw, urging him to return Pinochet to Santiago.

"Chileans believe that this issue is to be dealt with in Chile," they said in a joint letter.

Noisy demonstrations were staged in London Tuesday with more than 100 widows and relatives of Chilean policemen and soldiers killed during the 1973 coup and subsequent unrest waved flags and chanted slogans outside Prime Minister Tony Blair's London residence.

Then outside Straw's office, they came to face with Chilean exiles and relatives of the thousands who disappeared under Pinochet's rule. "Murderers" shouted the exiles as they are held back by police.

Yeltsin leaves hospital; government mulls budget

MOSCOW (R) — President Boris Yeltsin left hospital Wednesday and moved to one of his country residences to complete his recovery from pneumonia, the Kremlin said.

Yeltsin, whose authority has been clearly eroded by recurrent health problems and by Russia's deep economic crisis, briefly visited the Kremlin Monday to sack his chief of staff and several other officials.

The 67-year-old president has been otherwise confined to hospital since he was admitted on Nov. 22, although he has received visitors and took a stroll Tuesday.

The doctors believe the hospital stage of his recovery

from pneumonia is over," a Kremlin spokesman said by telephone.

The spokesman said Yeltsin's doctors had told him he could continue the next stage of his convalescence at one of his country residences with periodic check-ups at the Central Clinical Hospital where he was being treated.

"The doctors are generally satisfied with the president's condition," he said.

Yeltsin, who has moved to the Rus residence about 100 km northwest of Moscow, was not expected to hold any meetings Wednesday.

In the capital, Prime Minister Yevgeny Primakov called together his cabinet to discuss the 1999 budget and

to hear complaints from Defence Minister Igor Sergeyev that his forces should receive more funds than envisaged in the draft.

Russia's military is severely demoralised and underfunded. Troop numbers are being cut to reflect post-cold war realities and the aim is to revamp nuclear forces with fewer but better missiles.

As Primakov's cabinet met, the Strategic Rocket Forces said it had test-launched one of the new Topol-M ballistic missiles from a base in northwestern Russia.

Primakov has said the budget will be austere and intended to avoid hyperinflation. The draft is expected to be considered by the full cabinet Thursday before being handed to the State Duma lower house of parliament for approval.

Primakov was approved by Yeltsin and the Communist-dominated Duma as a compromise premier in September. He faces the difficult task of steering Russia out of financial crisis without further antagonising millions of unpaid workers.

The State Tax Service said it had collected 18 billion roubles (\$860 million) in tax last month, of which 70 per cent was cash. This compares with 12.2 billion roubles in cash the previous month.

Poor tax collection is one of reasons for the country's financial crisis and budget crunch.

Tripp attorney subpoenaed

ELLICOTT CITY, Md. (R) — The lawyer who advised Linda Tripp through much of the White House sex scandal said Tuesday that he would testify before a Maryland grand jury investigating whether she broke state wire-tap laws by recording phone conversations with Monica Lewinsky.

Lawyer James Moody said he had been subpoenaed to appear before the panel Thursday and to turn over any tapes in his possession that contain Lewinsky's voice.

"I have no tapes, so that's not a matter worth bothering

with," Moody told Reuters. "And I can't imagine they can ask me a question I can answer, but I'm willing to go there and find out. The lawyer-client relationship is privileged. And I have no right or power to testify in violation of that privilege."

Based in the District of Columbia, Moody is a federal lawyer with no licence to practise law in Maryland.

Tripp, a central figure in the White House sex scandal, tape-recorded hours of phone conversations with Lewinsky from Tripp's home in Columbia, Md.

The tapes, which revealed details about the former White House intern's infamous affair with President Clinton, were later turned over to independent counsel Kenneth Starr and formed a central part of his investigation of the president.

The controversy is expected to reach a climax later this week on Capitol Hill, with a widely anticipated House Judiciary Committee vote on whether to recommend that Clinton be impeached.

Meanwhile, Maryland prosecutor Stephen Montanarelli's grand jury in Howard County,

Md., has been trying to determine whether Tripp knew she was breaking state law when she tape-recorded conversations with Lewinsky.

Under Maryland law, all parties to a conversation must consent to taping. But in order to secure a conviction against Tripp, the prosecutor must prove the violation was committed in full knowledge of the law.

Tripp testified before Starr's federal grand jury that she knew she was violating Maryland law. But that testimony was made under a grant of immunity.

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The smallest gesture

WHAT AN irony that practically on the eve of the world's celebration of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights the U.S. government issued a penalty notice to an American non-profit humanitarian group seeking to deliver humanitarian aid in the form of desperately needed medicine to Iraq's children.

Voices in the Wilderness, a purely voluntary humanitarian movement of American citizens, openly acknowledges that it has violated U.S. federal law 18 times to enter Iraq for that purpose, but believes, rightly, that while disarmament (not just in Iraq, but worldwide) is important, the sanctions regime has proven itself a failure and is one of the most blatant human rights violations on record during this decade.

Therefore, the Voices group argues, humanitarian concerns and international law surely supercede U.S. federal law.

The organisation itself, and some individual members, are accused by the U.S. Department of the Treasury of having "engaged in certain prohibited transactions related to the embargo against Iraq."

Their grave violations of federal law include "the exportation of goods, including medical supplies and toys" and importing goods and/or services such as "an Iraqi water bottle label, an Iraqi stamp, photographic film, video and audio cassettes, postcards and assorted papers."

It is a bit difficult to take these allegations seriously, and, frankly, the entire affair sounds more like an attempt at harassment — masquerading as U.S. federal law — the intent of which is to intimidate Voices members who are slowly but surely gaining media attention about the on-going humanitarian crisis in Iraq.

We find it surprising that the U.S. government would employ such lowly tactics.

It is very clear to all and sundry that these people — ordinary middle-class Americans — pose no threat to U.S. or international security by way of their activities, nor do they contribute to the alleged Iraqi drive to rearm itself.

Such a manoeuvre also implies that the U.S. government — the self-proclaimed defender of freedom, democracy and human rights throughout the world — finds voluntary humanitarian work a crime under U.S. law. But then, perhaps this should not be surprising since Secretary of State Madeleine Albright's disclosure that human suffering and an ever-climbing death toll in Iraq are "a price worth paying" to disarm Saddam in an interview with CBS News over a year ago.

Today, the U.S. is the world's remaining superpower, and today, the world celebrates 50 years of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which very clearly outlines the human right to personal security, the right to freedom from torture and degrading treatment, the right to free movement, the right to adequate living standards, the right to education, the right to freedom from discrimination — every single one of which is trampled on by the sanctions regime.

It is becoming more and more apparent to us in the region that in reality, for U.S. policy makers, human rights are reserved for only a selected few.

But if the U.S. cares to show that it really does give a damn about human rights for every creed and colour, everywhere in the world, it could start with the smallest of gestures: by retracting the ridiculous allegations against Voices in the Wilderness, whose intentions are only to alleviate the suffering of innocent Iraqi children who had nothing to do with events that wrought sanctions on their country.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

Al Ra'i's Fahed Faneh said Jordan has strong elements of stability and these are the basic needs for social, economic and political success. The Kingdom has political stability — there are no military revolts — and it has been enjoying parliamentary life even before its independence under the umbrella of a 50-year-old Constitution, which is considered one of the best and most democratic in the Arab World. Jordan has internal stability and security; there is no violence, and ownership and other rights are protected, the writer added. Those who claim the opposite are really describing Jordan's sensitive political position in a region where the Arab-Israeli struggle dominates the agenda and this conflict has implications also for the economy. Demographic diversity, democratic fragility and the weakness of civil society institutions help create such speculations, Faneh claimed.

Al Dustour's editorial claimed Israel's recent aggravated behaviour on the eve of President Clinton's historical visit to Gaza and other independent Palestinian areas, aims at marginalising and minimising the event's importance. The Israeli government announced its refusal to implement the second stage of withdrawals in accordance with the Wye River Accord, said the paper, and reimposed the stubborn conditions, which were refused by the U.S. and the Palestinian National Authority. In addition to that escalation, the government maintains provocative practices such as increasing settlements and instigating violence against the Palestinians who ask for the freedom of detainees and refugees. After meeting with U.S. envoy Dennis Ross, Israeli officials apparently do not want to end or alter such actions, said the paper.

Making the signifier signify meaningfully

View from Academia



Dr. Ahmad Majdoubeh

Madrasa (school) is somewhat negative. It implies something negative. It implies something negative.

Jami'ah (university) is better. I like the notion implied in it of bringing students together, of accommodating a diverse group of people, and the notion that it attracts. The slightly pejorative notion that it amasses indiscriminately, we can live with, though it bothers us somewhat.

The English term "headmaster" or "schoolmaster" is

objectionable. "Headmaster" and "schoolmaster" are almost automatically associated with its authoritarianism. Its counterpart in Arabic, Mudarris, is acceptable. A mudarris is essentially a manager. Management is a positive term in education jargon — i.e. class management, the teacher as a manager, etc. The English terms, pedagogue and pedant, still used in some circles and colleges, are unacceptable. "Mudarris" connotations are obvious. I understand, of course, that it is a substance that counts. Names and titles may be secondary or even irrelevant. But names and titles are often indicative of substance and content. As we are working on improving substance and content, why not also work on surfaces, names and titles? Why not have the signifier signify meaningfully? It does not have ready-made substitutes for the above objectionable terms to propose here. Implied in this article, however, is the call on all of us to think collectively of substitutes.

IN TODAY'S world things are changing fast, including things in the world of education, of course. Physical settings, tools, syllabi, textbooks, methods of learning/teaching, objectives, policies, and regulations are changing. But roles are also changing: those of students, and those of teachers. Less speedily, attitudes and old habits are changing. Change is the name of the game, reform is a constant preoccupation and modernisation is almost an obsession.

As change — fast or slow, depending on where you are on the map of today's globe — happens, I wonder if it is not time we started re-naming, calling things by their more apt, fitting or correct names.

The other day, I was pondering over some of the terms we use, in Arabic and in English, in connection with teachers, students, and administrators both at the school as well as university levels. The Arabic mu'allim, mudarris, muhader and ustaath, equivalent or parallel

in English to teacher, instructor, lecturer and professor.

In light of the changes just spoken of, none of these terms seem to do.

With talk (much talk) about new approaches and new roles: partnership between students and teachers in the learning process; the de-centring of the position and authority of the teacher; the notion that teachers are facilitators, moderators and coaches, etc., there is something not only archaic and old-fashioned about the terminology we use in connection with teachers and students, but also seriously false. Denotatively and connotatively, such terms are ultimately unacceptable.

Mu'allim conveys the notion that teachers are possessors or transmitters of knowledge (they know and they impart knowledge — 'alima, from which Mu'allim is derived, is to "know"; 'allama is to make someone know).

Mudarris is equally reductive of students, implying a process of forcing informa-

tion upon them in a manner similar to Pavlovian, Skinnerian conditioning (in fact, the meaning — a very pejorative one — of darasa, from which mudarris is derived, is, as Cowman's Hans Weber Arabic-English dictionary puts it, first and foremost: to wipe out, blot out, obliterate, efface, extinguish, or thresh). Muhader is a lecturer or a preacher, i.e. a sole speaker, who comes to the classroom to deliver or read information and opinions to students, asking himself questions and answering them at the same time. The students (like the diligent scribes of ancient times) are supposed to write down, memorise and admire.

Ustaath is too prestigious and pretentious to fit the new role.

The English equivalents or parallels — teacher, instructor, lecturer and professor — are objectionable on the same grounds. They carry the same reductive and pejorative implications.

The terms we use for the learner in Arabic are tilmeeth

(denoting a student in the earlier stages of learning) and taleb. The latter is better than the former. Tilmeeth is almost equivalent to pupil in English; it is immensely belittling. A tilmeeth is a delicate, soft, small, tiny almost insignificant being. This is false; even kindergarten boys and girls are capable of thinking deeply, asking intelligent questions, contributing to discussions, asserting themselves, excelling in a variety of ways and conducting themselves impressively. They are to be taken seriously. Tilmeeth undercuts such seriousness.

What I like about Taleb (equivalent to student) is its active implication. Taleb is to demand, to ask for, to want to have, etc., all assertive, active and positive acts. The objection that may be raised in connection with it (aside from the term's unhappy association with the "Taleban" of Afghanistan) is that it is somewhat neglectful of the student's role as a giver and a partner. Still I like the term.

Generation Wye

ONE RECIPE for development success in parts of the region seems to be to inject aid from foreign governments and NGOs in a high-profile way and then use the positive fallout to help encourage massive private sector investment. For Palestine in particular, the first part of this formula has been applied, and the aid continues to roll in. The latest example came when more than forty countries met in an international donors conference at the end of November, in it, pledges included \$480 million by the European Union, \$200 million by Japan, \$100 million by Saudi Arabia, and — depending on congressional approval — a hefty contribution by the United States.

However, due to the instability caused by Israeli repression, local and international investors alike remain hesitant. Israeli control is the key problem here, and a lot of pressure is needed for it to loosen up to allow the Palestinian economy to develop. Until now though, those same generous international donors have been largely stingy with their political pressure, avoiding a challenge to Israeli policies. You even get the feeling that some of the aid is an attempt to make up for this.

The U.N. estimates that last year Israeli closures in the West Bank cost the Palestinian economy more than \$200 million in lost income, equal to about half of what Palestine received in international donations in 1997. Israel still has total control over people and goods coming into Palestinian areas, and Israeli closure policy is a cause of the dangerous

decline in the Palestinian economy over the past five years. Israel's actions have the effect of limiting access to jobs in Israel for Palestinian workers, and there is no question that the persistent policy of imposing closure on the West Bank and Gaza has had a damaging effect.

The Palestinian economy's need for outside investment is obvious, but who will come in under present circumstances? Limited Palestinian access from the West Bank and Gaza to the Israeli labour market, ostensibly due to Israeli security concerns, illustrates one way in which the Israeli government is destabilising a fragile Palestinian economy. By cutting Palestinian employment in Israel, Israeli policy has seriously hurt Palestine's economy. This has caused many educated Palestinians to work in jobs which do not use their skills and training. Such a situation has come about because of the restrictions that Israel puts on the mobility of the Palestinian labour force, not only to enter Israel, but also to move around in Palestine and travel outside. Past agreements state that both sides will attempt to maintain the normal movement of labour, but Israel has ignored this. Israel is thus further destabilising a precarious situation.

Israeli policies also reduce local economic options. Palestinian communities in the West Bank, Gaza Strip, Jerusalem and Israel are isolated from each other, making local investment and integrated economic development very difficult. One alternative to local capital is investment by

Diaspora Palestinians, but this has been low due to the risk involved. Israeli policies have continued to include land confiscation and border closures, so many of the rich Palestinians outside the country are naturally hesitant to put their capital at the mercy of Israel.

Undermining the Palestinian economy with siege tactics thus has a major negative impact on business decision-makers. There is great interest to invest, but there is too much ambiguity in the situation for most.

Have the Wye accords changed this? Some people seem to imagine so, and to listen to various Western officials, you would think a new Generation Wye was about to focus on investment in Palestine. In particular, U.S. Secretary of Commerce William Daley has been a prime exponent of this viewpoint.

Secretary Daley, who has vowed to involve the U.S. business community in the peace process, recently said he "saw a new spirit of co-operation" in the Middle East, confirmation "that the Wye Agreement is working" and that "as peace takes hold, there will be trade and investment opportunities." Secretary Daley compared the situation to that in Northern Ireland and in parts of Africa, where peace gave economics a chance.

As U.S. secretary of commerce, Daley's prime concern is rightly his country's private sector, and he says he is committed to helping the Palestinians involve the American business commu-

ty in the peace process. Daley will return to the region soon with President Clinton, and he will be back again next year with a bevy of U.S. businesspeople. Whether the latter have been taken to the waters of the Palestinian economy can be persuaded to drink by putting their money into business projects remains to be seen, in light of Israeli policy.

Yet, even if such money comes in, it has to go into the right kind of investment. The current building boom in parts of Palestine may look good to some observers, but it hides deeper problems for the economy. Palestinians are certainly building, but most of what is going up is housing for the more prosperous. Diaspora Palestinians are building many of them, but this construction "boom" — like its counterpart in Amman in the mid-90s — is misleading. The problem is that fancy houses alone do not make an economy. What Palestinians need is not investment in more luxurious homes but in productive projects that will create exports.

With respect to Secretary Daley — who is doing a good job both for his country and the Middle East — Generation Wye is probably going to take some time to put its money where the politicians' and diplomats' mouths are. Despite Wye, the obstacles to longer-term investment haven't changed. Israel still controls things, and the constant tension created by such hegemony results in an environment that is discouraging investment. Meanwhile the aid rolls in, but by itself it will not accomplish much.

LETTERS

Clarification

To the editor:

IN REFERENCE to the article "Alo! wins tender in Yemen", JT Dec. 9 please note four major points to be clarified:

1. We have only submitted the tender and are still waiting to be notified by the Yemeni government whether or not we win the tender.
2. The agreement with Jordanian Co. is valid for 15 years, after which time it will be renewed upon renegotiating the terms of the agreement.
3. Alo! has benefited from the experience of the Greek communication firm OTE.
4. The cost of each installed payphone is JD1,200, not JD120 as reported.

Hamed O. Khatib
 Asst. Marketing Manager
 Alo! PR & Advertising
 Amman

Non-renewable means forever

To the editor:

RECENTLY, I read of what seems to be a celebration of Jordan's predicted receipt of a \$730 million loan for the Disi-Amman Water Project. ("World Bank may guarantee \$730 million in loans for water project," JT Dec. 7) As we all know, water in Jordan, in fact in the entire region is a major concern. However, stripping the inreplaceable aquifers is not the answer, paying to do so is even further off the mark.

Palestine 1 Israel 0

Jerusalem Life



Daoud Kuttab

SHORTLY AFTER Israel's prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu took office he held a long meeting with the Israeli negotiating team which dealt with the Palestinians. After discussing a number of issues, the newly elected Israeli leader was asked about what he intended to do with the newly built Gaza Airport. Netanyahu is reported to have replied the Palestinians will never have an airport, and they can use the tarmac as a soccer field if they want to.

This week, more than two years later, the President of the United States, William Jefferson Clinton III, will land on the recently opened Gaza International Airport. Whether he will arrive in Airforce One or in a U.S. Marine helicopter is immaterial. The arrival of the U.S. president in Gaza will send a powerful yet simple message: inasmuch as Israel needs peace and security, Palestinians need and deserve freedom and independence.

Overcoming the soccer field versus airport dilemma is only one of the problems that is facing the Palestinian-Israeli peace process. A number of issues agreed upon in the Wye Memorandum are still unfulfilled. The Gaza-West Bank free passage way, promised within 10 days of the agreement has not been opened. The Gaza port has disappeared in non-working committees. The second and third phase of the 13% redeployment due shortly have been postponed indefinitely. Unilateral settlement activities have been encouraged by the foreign minister of Israel and the boobying up of the prisoner issue has boomeranged in the face of the Israelis.

At one time early in his administration, Netanyahu said that he wanted to bring Palestinian expectations down. When the Wye Agreement was signed Palestinian officials boasted about succeeding in gaining the approval for the release of 750 Palestinian prisoners. Since it was expected that the released prisoners would be from Yasser Arafat's own Fatah movement and since there are only about one thousand detainees who belong to Fatah, it was safe to assume that the majority of these prisoners would be released. The present media savvy government made no attempt to correct the record when Palestinian officials proudly informed the public that the political prisoners would be released. The Netanyahu government which monitors the talk even of a Palestinian child on Palestine TV and the Voice of Palestine Radio said nothing about the prisoner issue.

Having suffered from previous deceptions by the Israelis who released prisoners with a few days prison term left, there was a genuine expectation that this time long serving prisoners would be released. At the very least the hope was that the criteria set up in Oslo II would be honoured, namely the release of older, ailing, long-term and young prisoners. Certainly prisoners who had already spent 2/3 of their term expected that like all prisoners around the world

they would be allowed parole.

Not only were the expectations of the prisoners and their families dashed, but there was a feeling that the Netanyahu government wanted to demoralize them. The mixing up of the PLO prisoners with common criminals and thieves was a blatant attempt to humiliate these proud fighters by robbing them of their long sought freedom. Palestinian activist had joined the movement in the pursuit of the liberation of occupied lands. Now the leaders who had sent them on military missions were negotiating with Israelis while they were rotting in jail. The peace agreements, which they support, were signed by the leaders of the Palestine Liberation Organisation. How can these freedom fighters, who participated in the liberation struggle, make sense of their continued incarceration. It is exactly these prisoners, who were jailed before the peace process began and who have publicly supported it since, who have begun the hunger strike. And it is their families and comrades who are supporting them in the streets.

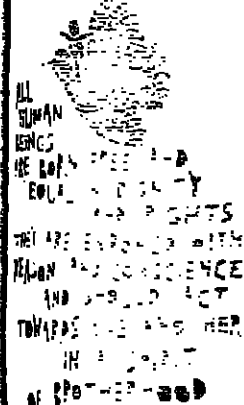
The visit by President Clinton to Palestine is certainly welcomed by Palestinians. Not only will he have a chance to see the tremendous damage caused by more than 30 years of Israeli occupation, he will see some of the positive works of the last few years of Palestinian rule. A Palestinian University might grant him an honorary Ph.D.

As he attempts to restart the peace process President Clinton must reiterate some of the basic rules of soccer. There must be an even playing field. Every side must respect the rules of the game and those who play too rough get penalised, and even kicked out. While some Israeli ministers might be thinking that Netanyahu scored an own goal by supporting the visit of Clinton to the Palestinian territories, the real goal scored in this game has been that of a persevering old man who has kept his cool and has tried to accomplish the goals of his people.

This Palestinian desire to live in a free state alongside Israel has not been matched by the other side which still harbours expansionist goals. While the peace process is still in its early stages, if I were to give a score for the early part of this soccer match, the score would be Palestine 1 — for perseverance and staying on course — Israel 0 — for its doomed efforts to change the rules of history.

The abridged thirty articles

- Article 1: Right to Equality
- Article 2: Freedom from Discrimination
- Article 3: Right to Life, Liberty, and personal security
- Article 4: Freedom from Slavery
- Article 5: Freedom from Torture and Degrading Treatment
- Article 6: Right to Recognition as a Person Before the Law
- Article 7: Right to Equality before the Law



- Article 8: Right to Remedy by Competent Tribunal
- Article 9: Freedom from Arbitrary Arrest and Exile
- Article 10: Right to a Fair Public Hearing

- Article 11: Right to be considered innocent until proven guilty
- Article 12: Freedom from Interference in Family, Home and Correspondence
- Article 13: Right to Free Movement in and out of the country

- Article 14: Right to Asylum in Other Countries from Persecution
- Article 15: Right to a Family and Freedom to Marry
- Article 16: Right to Marriage and Family
- Article 17: Right to Property

- Article 18: Freedom of Belief and Religion
- Article 19: Freedom of Opinion and Information
- Article 20: Right of Peaceful Assembly and Association
- Article 21: Right to Participate in Government and in the elections
- Article 22: Right to Social Security
- Article 23: Right to desirable work and to join trade unions
- Article 24: Right to rest and leisure
- Article 25: Right to Adequate living standards
- Article 26: Right to education
- Article 27: Right to participate in the cultural life of a community
- Article 28: Right to Social Security assuring human rights
- Article 29: Right to participate in community duties essential to free and full development
- Article 30: Freedom from interference in above rights

The 50th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights

Out of the ashes of war, a vision of human dignity and rights

The abridged thirty articles

Article 1: Right to Equality

Article 2: Freedom from Discrimination

Article 3: Right to Life, liberty, and personal security

Article 4: Freedom from Slavery

Article 5: Freedom from Torture, and Degrading Treatment

Article 6: Right to Recognition as a Person Before the Law

Article 7: Right to Equality Before the Law

ALL HUMAN BEINGS ARE BORN FREE AND EQUAL IN DIGNITY AND RIGHTS. THEY ARE ENDOWED WITH REASON AND CONSCIENCE AND SHOULD ACT TOWARDS ONE ANOTHER IN A SPIRIT OF BROTHERHOOD.

Article 8: Right to Remedy by Competent Tribunal

Article 9: Freedom From Arbitrary Arrest And Exile

Article 10: Right to a Fair Public Hearing

Article 11: Right to be considered innocent until proven guilty

Article 12: Freedom from Interference in Family, Home and Correspondence

Article 13: Right to Free Movement in and out of the country

Article 14: Right to Asylum in Other Countries from Persecution

Article 15: Right to a Nationality and Freedom to change it

Article 16: Right to Marriage and Family

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Article 21: Right to Participate in Government and in free elections

Article 22: Right to Social Security

Article 23: Right to desirable work and to join trade unions

Article 24: Right to rest and leisure

Article 25: Right to Adequate Living standards

Article 26: Right to education

Article 27: Right to participate in the cultural life of a community

Article 28: Right to Social Security

Article 29: Right to participate in community duties

Article 30: Freedom from abuse of rights

After 50 years, growing support for the Universal Declaration of Human Rights is giving it new life.

By Sara Bullard of the Ford Foundation

THE HORRORS of World War II were still fresh in the minds of the United Nations delegates who met in Paris during December 1948. Heading the agenda was a declaration — three years in the making — that would define, for the first time in history, the rights and freedoms of all people. The document was the product of a global effort involving more than 50 governments, 8 divisions of the United Nations, and hundreds of non-governmental organisations. By the time it was presented to the U.N. General Assembly, it had been through 81 committee meetings and survived 168 suggested amendments. It also withstood the scrutiny of the chairwoman of the Commission of Human Rights, the former First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt, and her drafting committee representing eight countries (Australia, Chile, China, France, Lebanon, the United States, the Soviet Union, and the United Kingdom).

At 3 o'clock in the morning on Dec. 10, the member countries of the United Nations finally adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. It begins quite simply: "All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights," and goes on to list, in 30 articles, those rights. The first section describes civil and political rights; the second outlines economic, social, and cultural rights.

At the time the declaration was adopted, the United States Library of Congress did not even have a human rights entry in its index. Since then,



Eleanor Roosevelt with a poster of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948 (file photo)

thousands of organisations devoted to the protection of individual and group rights have emerged worldwide.

"The Universal Declaration and the inviolable principles that it enshrines were the fruit of the tireless efforts and determination of men and

women from all parts of the world," said Kofi Annan, secretary-general of the United Nations, at the opening of the 54th session of the Commission on Human Rights last spring in Geneva. "Today those principles, which have become the yardstick for measuring the degree of progress of societies, are known and recognised by all the inhabitants of the globe."

Annan noted that "growing support for the declaration has given its message new life," and reaffirmed its universality.

Although the declaration was not intended to be legally binding, it has now become part of the customary law of nations — cited in court decisions, written into constitutions, used to guide foreign policy and trade decisions, and serving as the basis for treaties and international human rights conventions. It was also the foundation for two international agreements adopted by the U.N. in 1966 — the Covenant on Economic Social and Cultural Rights, and the Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. The United States signed the civil rights covenant but not the economic rights covenant. The Soviet Union did the opposite.

When nations celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Universal Declaration in December, there will still be people dying of hunger and poor health; children will still be forced to work instead of receiving an education; people will be jailed, tortured, or killed because of their beliefs, or their ethnic origin; girls will be sold into prostitution; ethnic minorities will suffer discrimination and abuse, and many people will be jobless. The declaration has not created a world that guarantees human rights. But it has created a world where it is possible to believe in those rights, work for them, and hope for their realisation.

The secretary general, Kofi Annan's, anniversary message

HUMAN RIGHTS DAY 1998 marks the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Today, we celebrate the half-century of a United Nations milestone. We honour the highest of human aspirations and renew our promise to conquer the worst of human cruelty.

We pay tribute to the minds of those who conceived of these human rights, and to the memory of those who died for them. And knowing the power of human wrong, we reaffirm our faith in human rights — that faith which ultimately will sustain humanity through its darkest hours and help us defend our human rights where they are most imperilled.

Human Rights Day 1998 is a day for all of us who enjoy human rights to imagine life without them — and to think how hard we would fight for

them to retain them. It is a day for those who are still denied their human rights to dream again of asserting them, and to know that their dream is our dream — the dream of all human rights for all.

It is a day for us to recall not only the rights attained over the 50 years, but also the rights denied; to pursue the achievement of justice by all and for all; to defend against the abuse of human rights with greater vigilance than ever, and to pursue the violators of human rights with greater persistence than ever. It is the day to renew our commitment to globalising justice in the age of globalisation.

I began this anniversary year by reaffirming the universality of human rights, and by arguing that human rights are foreign to no culture and native to all nations. From

the streets of Asia to the towns of Africa, to the courts of Europe, this past year has been a year of protest and progress.

Rights have been asserted where regimes once ruled; justice has been delivered where impunity once reigned, and memory has been honoured where the powerful once enjoyed immunity. If only every year were to offer such hope, and prove to all that human rights cannot be denied where human beings live and breathe.

But that is our challenge. To make it so. To make every day matter in the fight to broaden the horizons of human rights until that day when no man is tortured, no woman is abused and no child is denied his dignity — when all human beings enjoy their human rights.

Still waiting for a ray of hope

By Ian Black

IT WAS WELL after midnight in the elegantly curved Palais de Chaillot in Paris, opposite the Eiffel Tower, when the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was presented to the United Nations General Assembly half a century ago this week.

"A long job finished," commented a satisfied Eleanor Roosevelt, chairwoman of the U.N. Human Rights Commission and widow of the American president who had led the penultimate stage of the bloody triumph over fascism.

December 10, 1948 marked an event of huge importance: three years after a world war of unparalleled savagery, the fledgling U.N. gave eloquent expression to the very loftiest of human aspirations.

Trumpeting hope over experience, the language echoed the American Declaration of Independence to affirm that "all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood".

No matter that support for these ringing sentiments was far from unanimous: Saudi Arabia abstained; South Africa, with its new system of apartheid, objected. So did the Soviet Union, demanding the primacy of national sovereignty and the collective over the individual rights it saw as the embodiment of bourgeois liberalism.

It was a moment of heady

idealism in unpromising circumstances: as Mrs. Roosevelt expressed the hope that the declaration would be a "Magna Carta of all mankind", the world was digging the first trenches of the cold war.

As this week's anniversary celebrations are held in the same curving, modernist edifice on the right bank of the Seine, the fate of Chile's former dictator, Augusto Pinochet, stands as a symbol of the declaration's lasting importance.

Is there to be justice or impunity for crimes against humanity? How much do rights matter? What progress has been made in 50 years? Scan the globe for examples of genocide, repression, torture, war, rape, starvation and environmental degradation and the answer might well be a hollow laugh.

But since 1948 human rights have entered the mainstream of international discourse. Even the harshest tyrant, from Baghdad to Pyongyang, uses the language of rights if only to distort its universal meaning. Algeria, bleeding in a nightmare civil war, boasts a government-backed human rights commission which catalogues the atrocities of Islamist enemies and ignores its own abuses. Other regimes have done the same to deflect criticism rather than create real accountability.

Nowadays even the most recalcitrant are urged to respect human rights: the World Bank and the IMF are offering financial aid to

Burma's brutal military junta to coax it into dialogue with the opposition.

Abuses in a changing Iran get insufficient attention. Saudi Arabia, bulwark of the West, remains a black hole. Arms sales continue apace.

Yet the machinery for protecting human rights is there: by the time the bi-polar world ended in 1991, international conventions had set standards for civil and political rights and women's and children's rights, and benchmarks defining torture and racial discrimination.

Even in the face of horrors in Cambodia, Bosnia and Rwanda, advances have been made. Kofi Annan is the most rights-conscious U.N. secretary-general ever. His choice of Mary Robinson, the former Irish president, as U.N. high commissioner for human rights was widely applauded.

This year's U.N. agreement establishing a permanent international criminal court to try a future Pinochet, Pol Pot or Saddam Hussein was a landmark for international humanitarian law. So was the campaign to ban anti-personnel landmines, though both highlighted America's instinctive opposition to any commitment that could restrict its freedom of action abroad.

But human rights, as Clare Short, the International Development Secretary, has argued, need a broader definition if they are to become universally respected. In regions where millions live in abject poverty, Western concepts of

civil and political rights can mean little if basic economic and social rights are not guaranteed.

This is difficult terrain: torture is torture in any language, but in a globalised world advanced industrial societies cannot assume the primacy of their humanist values.

So as diplomats and dignitaries gather again in the Palais de Chaillot, governments should be reminded of the need for vigilance about their own human rights records, as well as others' and of a yawning gap between goals and achievements.

France has already been accused of failing to invite Chinese dissidents or Tibetan activists to this week's celebrations for fear of offending Beijing. In a world where abuses are a daily problem, not a philosophical abstraction, there can be no blind spots: Kenya should face censure after admitting that police torture is common. Friends of Egypt cannot remain silent over the detention of the head of the country's Organisation for Human Rights apparently after receiving a British government grant.

Back in 1948, Nelson Mandela saw the Universal Declaration as "a sudden ray of hope at one of our darkest hours." What the originators drafted was a blueprint for a better future. But the job was not finished that December: it is a work still in progress.

—The Guardian

Can our rights be universal?

By Paul Vallely

"WE HOLD these truths to be self-evident." So said the founding fathers of the United States in their declaration of independence. Those were the days. In this age of uncertainty, what is there left which is self-evident to us? This is the epoch of post-modernism, when the quest for a universal narrative is over, and each of us must tell a different story. More than that, our relativist consensus judges each of them to be of equal validity. Tolerance of one another is as much as we can hope for.

But perhaps there is something more. Earlier this week a group of scholars from the three Abrahamic religions got together to consider the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which celebrates its 50th anniversary next month. They were concerned to highlight the fact that in all three traditions — Jewish, Christian and Muslim — there is a clear basis of support for the declaration. In the process, a more interesting question arose.

Are all self-evident truths merely statements of faith — or can they be arrived at by reason? There were those, like Ian Markham, a Christian professor of "theology and public life," who insisted that secular human rights are merely religious statements in disguise. The American fathers went on to explain that their idea of what was self-evident was drawn from the belief that "all men... are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights." In the same way, Markham insisted, modern secularist statements are drawn from a culture whose assumptions are inherently theistic. Religion, as the Jewish scholar Edward Kessler told the seminar, is at the root of human rights.

Hollow laughs all round, then, from those who suffered at the hands of the Inquisition or its modern-day equivalents: The Taliban, the zealots of Zionism or the Christians who murder doctors engaged in abortion. Those like Markham are unperturbed. Yes, throughout history, people have violated human rights in the name of religion — but in doing so they betrayed the tradition they purported to uphold.

The irony is that the secular West has made the language of rights central to its social discourse, while undermining any possible justification of such language. "If ultimately humans are nothing more than complex bundles of atoms emerging from a blind and irrational process and facing extinction when we die," Markham told the meeting of the Interfaith Foundation, "then it is difficult to see how we can affirm the inherent dignity of people."

This is not a picture those in the tradition of John Locke, Thomas Paine or the French Revolution theorists would accept. Yet it was an Enlightenment thinker, Jeremy Bentham, who insisted there are "no such things as natural rights, no such things as rights anterior to the establishment of government, no such things as natural rights (as) opposed to legal (ones). Natural rights (are)... nonsense upon stilts."

If that is true, rights are purely empirical and probably local to each culture. So how — in a post-modern world — can we justify any claim that is universal and objective? Saying that the law ought to be linked with the moral codes of the community is not much help: the Nazis had significant support from the German national community for the killing of Jews, homosexuals and gypsies.

In the end, said Dr. Elizabeth Vallance of the Interfaith Foundation's committee, you cannot justify basic principles; you just choose them. I was unconvinced, for we don't choose starting from a blank sheet. We are born into a culture: we learn its morality; we inherit frameworks within which to exercise our reason. And, if our culture's old formula, which embedded rights in law and responsibilities in religion, has broken down with the growth of secularisation, where does that leave us?

Yet there was a challenge even to the basis of this exchange. The Human Rights Declaration is billed as "universal," said the Muslim academic Dr. Zaki Badawi; but the U.S. baseball championship is described as a World Series, though only Americans play in it. For many, "universal" is just a cloak for the values of the affluent West. For the homeless or starving, freedom of speech or assembly mean little. And, though the Muslim feminist Dr. Sula Tajiri-Farouki conceded that Muslim countries are among the worst abusers of human rights, Islam's communalism and strong sense of social responsibility could also be a check on the abuses that flow from individualism.

It was wrong, said another Islamic scholar: that no Hindu, Muslim or Sikh was involved in drawing up the 1948 declaration. Yet if Muslims feel affronted by that, it does not automatically invalidate what the declaration says. After all, gravity isn't Western just because it was Newton who discovered it. So why do Muslims embrace Western science so easily and yet not other aspects of modernity?

Modernity is a double-edged sword, said the academic Dr. Ifkhar Malik. It boasts of tolerance, yet minorities were better tolerated in Moorish Spain and the Ottoman Empire than in modern Europe. Modernity brought us the Holocaust, ethnic cleansing and a particularly brutish kind of nationalism. And are the Western signatories to the declaration any less hypocritical? Since signing, the French have killed 1.5 million Algerians, and the Americans countless Vietnamese. And yet modernity has brought us together, said Rabbi Jonathan Magonet, "but for modernity, we wouldn't even be talking to each other."

Religions, as Dietrich Bonhoeffer said, have a lot to learn from secular society. But religions — which are collective by nature where the human rights declaration is individualistic — clearly have something to say about the roots of secularism. The seminar ended, but the debate continues.

—The Independent

Government unveils JD2,160 million 1999 budget

Bread prices to drop on eve of Ramadan as government lifts subsidy, industrial inputs tariffs up for reduction

By Tareq Ayyoub

AMMAN — The government on Wednesday unveiled the JD2,160 million 1999 draft budget law with an estimated deficit of 7 per cent, or JD388 million, to be covered by foreign and domestic loans.

In his presentation to Parliament, Finance Minister Michel Marto also announced the government's intention to reduce bread prices and remove the quarterly cash subsidies programme for the underprivileged, but apply an exemption for families who benefit from the National Aid Fund.

Marto, a former deputy governor of the Central Bank of Jordan, told lawmakers that the draft budget includes the lifting of customs on industrial inputs in return for the increase in the value added tax.

According to figures released by the minister, the Kingdom's total revenues are expected to amount to JD1,925 million, of which domestic revenues are estimated to reach JD1,725 million (JD932 million as tax revenues and JD793 million as non-tax revenues).

The draft budget indicated that foreign loans and grants expected next year will total JD200 million, Marto told MPs.

The minister said current expenditure in 1999 is estimated to be JD1,683 million, of which JD950 million will be allocated as

salaries and pensions to the military and civil servants and JD307 million as interest on local and foreign loans.

Marto noted that 15 per cent of the current expenditure will be considered as pensions for retired government employees.

He added that capital expenditure in the draft law will amount to JD477 million. Among the major projects that will benefit from this amount are three dams that will be built in the south, the King Abdullah Hospital and the Social Safety Net programme.

The minister said that if foreign and local loans and grants are taken in to consideration, the actual deficit will come to 3.4 per cent, or JD188 million.

Marto said that while the 1999 economic growth rate is expected to reach 3 per cent, inflation is expected to exceed 4 per cent.

He added that exports and imports are expected to increase by 4 per cent in the same period, while the expected deficit in the current account of the balance of payments is 1.5 per cent of the GDP.

The minister said the debt service rate will decline to 20 per cent of the Kingdom's total exports and imports in 1999.

He said that in addition to the exemption of the industrial inputs, the government will reduce the ceiling of the customs tariffs from 40 per cent to 35 per cent as part of its gradual liberalisation of foreign trade. "To compensate the pub-

lic treasury losses by these reductions we should raise the value added tax on sales... and reconsider the exemptions given to some goods and services," the minister told the Lower House.

Marto said the reduction of bread prices will become effective at the beginning of the Holy Month of Ramadan, which is expected to start on December 19 or 20.

He said the reduction will amount to 50 fils for the first grade bread, that is 150 fils down from 200 fils per Kg, and 40 fils for the second grade bread (local), 140 fils down from 180 fils per Kg.

He added that the reduction, which will be valid for one year, will cost the government JD15 million according to the current prices of wheat in the international market.

Marto warned that any inclination to increase public spending will compound the financial difficulties of the government.

Such a policy "will lead to a financial deficit that cannot be covered and a public debt that cannot be redeemed and to unbearable taxes," Marto warned the Parliament.

The minister indicated that foreign debt has increased from JD6,533 million in 1997 to JD6,876 million in 1998 due to the increase in foreign currency rates against the U.S. dollar, which amounted to \$300 million, and the capitalisation of interests. Marto said that domestic

debt increased by 17.6 per cent of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in 1998, up to JD923.5 million by the end of November, compared to JD821.4 million in 1997.

The minister said the increase in the public debt stemmed from the rise in the 1998 deficit.

Marto said foreign reserves at the CBI amounted to \$1,210 million by the end of November, enough, he said, to cover the Kingdom's imports for four months, compared to

\$1.6 billion at the beginning of 1998.

The minister said the decrease in foreign reserves was attributable to pressures the Kingdom faced in last July, when news of His Majesty King Hussein's health was being reported in the media.

He said that as a result, the CBI adjusted interest rates on savings in the dinar.

Marto said credits extended to the private sector increased by 7 per cent this year, compared to 5 per

cent in 1997.

He said that the balance of payments is expected to incur a deficit of 2.6 per cent of the GDP this year, compared to a surplus of 3.9 per cent of GDP last year.

The minister said that the cost of living index in the past 11 months rose by 5 per cent compared to 3 per cent for the same period in 1997.

He said the slow pace of Jordan's economic growth in the past three years has affected the performance of the public finance system.

Marto said 1998 figures showed that local revenues this year declined by 11.3 per cent, with an increase of the public expenditure of JD133 million, or 3.6 per

cent, resulting in a deficit of 9.6 per cent of the GDP, or JD502 million.

The minister said the deficit this year will decline to 5.5 per cent as a result of the JD212 million in foreign grants and loans, which will bring the deficit to JD290 million.

Marto described 1998 as a "difficult year," a result, he said, of the decline in domestic revenues and a consequent weakening of the private sector's ability to pay taxes and public corporations' ability to repay their debts to the government.

The minister indicated that regional and international developments, namely a retreat in international economic performance, the

U.N. sanctions against Iraq and Israel's blockade of trade between Jordan and the Palestinian National Authority have added burdens to the government.

He said the decline in oil prices on the world market "had a negative impact on the marketing ability of Jordanian products and the (foreign currencies) transfer of Jordanian (remittances) in the Gulf Arab states, which declined noticeably this year."

"The deadlock in peace making in the region was the most important reason for creating instability in this area, which resulted negatively in the investment atmosphere in the Middle East in general," Marto told the lawmakers.

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CURRENCY	JORDAN DYNAR	BAHRAIN DYNAR	QATAR DYNAR	SAUDI RIAL	IRANIAN RIAL	YEMENI RIAL	LIBYAN DYNAR	EGYPTIAN POUND	SYRIAN LIRA	LEBANON LIRA	ISRAELI SHEQEL	INDONESIAN RUPIAH	THAI BATH	PHILIPPINE PESO	VIETNAMESE DONG
JORDAN DYNAR	1.0000	0.1887	0.1927	1.8778	1.8390	0.1844	2.3420	0.2077	0.7080	0.2500	1.7366	1.7366	1.7366	1.7366	1.7366
BAHRAIN DYNAR	5.2884	1.0000	1.0213	9.9499	9.7436	1.0302	12.4133	1.1061	3.7630	1.2740	1.2740	1.2740	1.2740	1.2740	1.2740
QATAR DYNAR	5.1881	0.9792	1.0000	9.7425	9.5408	1.0087	12.1549	1.0776	3.6752	1.2476	1.2476	1.2476	1.2476	1.2476	1.2476
SAUDI RIAL	0.5325	0.1028	0.1028	1.0000	0.9793	0.1035	1.2476	1.1108	3.6752	1.0000	1.0000	1.0000	1.0000	1.0000	1.0000
IRANIAN RIAL	0.5438	0.1028	0.1048	1.0211	1.0000	0.1057	1.2740	1.1128	3.6850	1.0000	1.0000	1.0000	1.0000	1.0000	1.0000
YEMENI RIAL	5.1434	0.9707	0.9814	9.6884	9.4884	1.0000	12.0500	1.0883	3.6419	1.0000	1.0000	1.0000	1.0000	1.0000	1.0000
LIBYAN DYNAR	0.4368	0.0868	0.0868	0.7849	0.7849	0.0868	1.0000	0.8687	3.5022	0.8687	0.8687	0.8687	0.8687	0.8687	0.8687
EGYPTIAN POUND	4.8145	0.9087	0.9239	9.0408	8.8538	0.9361	11.2708	1.0000	3.2000	1.0000	1.0000	1.0000	1.0000	1.0000	1.0000
SYRIAN LIRA	21.4831	4.0546	4.1408	40.3416	39.5005	4.1769	60.3300	4.4821	15.2100	4.4821	4.4821	4.4821	4.4821	4.4821	4.4821
LEBANON LIRA	1.4124	0.2955	0.2722	2.6523	2.5974	0.2746	3.3081	2.8834	1.0000	1.0000	1.0000	1.0000	1.0000	1.0000	1.0000
ISRAELI SHEQEL	0.8529	0.1610	0.1644	1.6015	1.5684	0.1658	1.9881	1.7771	0.6008	0.6008	0.6008	0.6008	0.6008	0.6008	0.6008
INDONESIAN RUPIAH	2.3548	0.4444	0.4539	4.4219	4.3304	0.4578	5.5169	0.4891	1.6972	0.4891	0.4891	0.4891	0.4891	0.4891	0.4891
THAI BATH	1.9208	0.3526	0.3702	3.6059	3.5322	0.3734	5.0000	0.3888	1.3566	0.3888	0.3888	0.3888	0.3888	0.3888	0.3888
PHILIPPINE PESO	7.9573	1.4905	1.5222	14.6299	14.5229	1.5354	19.5020	1.6404	5.8943	1.6404	1.6404	1.6404	1.6404	1.6404	1.6404
VIETNAMESE DONG	1.8750	0.3161	0.3229	3.1454	3.0803	0.3257	3.9242	0.3479	1.2889	0.3479	0.3479	0.3479	0.3479	0.3479	0.3479
LIBYAN DYNAR	2.6535	0.5008	0.5115	4.8829	4.7897	0.5159	6.2167	0.5511	1.8787	0.5511	0.5511	0.5511	0.5511	0.5511	0.5511
ISRAELI SHEQEL	11.3782	2.1475	2.1931	21.3685	20.9242	2.2122	28.6572	2.3633	8.0559	2.3633	2.3633	2.3633	2.3633	2.3633	2.3633
INDONESIAN RUPIAH	23.3188	4.4010	4.4946	43.7886	42.8821	4.5337	54.6314	4.6434	16.5098	4.6434	4.6434	4.6434	4.6434	4.6434	4.6434
THAI BATH	48.5852	8.1867	8.3616	81.2049	79.3169	8.4431	113.7889	10.0880	34.3870	10.0880	10.0880	10.0880	10.0880	10.0880	10.0880
PHILIPPINE PESO	2.2929	0.4328	0.4420	4.3057	4.2166	0.4458	5.3719	0.4762	1.6334	0.4762	0.4762	0.4762	0.4762	0.4762	0.4762
VIETNAMESE DONG	3.9800	0.7474	0.7633	7.4363	7.2823	0.7699	9.2778	0.8225	2.8037	0.8225	0.8225	0.8225	0.8225	0.8225	0.8225
CYPRUS POUND	2.8782	0.5432	0.5548	5.4049	5.2930	0.5586	6.7432	0.5978	2.0378	0.5978	0.5978	0.5978	0.5978	0.5978	0.5978
AUSTRIAN SHEQEL	18.5734	3.1280	3.1945	31.1222	30.4779	3.2228	38.8286	3.4424	11.7340	3.4424	3.4424	3.4424	3.4424	3.4424	3.4424
CANADIAN DOLLAR	2.1831	0.4120	0.4208	4.0994	4.0145	0.4244	5.1145	0.4834	1.5488	0.4834	0.4834	0.4834	0.4834	0.4834	0.4834
EURO	1.2003	0.2265	0.2314	2.2540	2.2074	0.2334	2.8122	0.2493	0.8485	0.2493	0.2493	0.2493	0.2493	0.2493	0.2493

MAJOR CURRENCIES AGAINST JORDAN DINAR

CURRENCY	US DOLLAR	EURO	GERMAN MARK	FRANCE FRANC	UK POUND	YEN	SWISS FRANC	ITALY LIRA	NETHERLAND GUILDER	SPAIN PESO	PORTUGAL ESCUDO	GREECE DRACHMA	CYPRUS POUND	AUSTRIAN SHEQEL	CANADIAN DOLLAR	EURO
US DOLLAR	1.0000	1.8591	0.9598	0.7553	0.1788	0.8432	0.5323	0.0571	1.767	1.6664	16.6363	0.2036	0.2036	0.2036	0.2036	0.2036
EURO	0.8333	1.0000	0.9362	0.7460	0.1660	0.8082	0.5214	0.0574	1.7155	1.6155	16.1555	0.2000	0.2000	0.2000	0.2000	0.2000
GERMAN MARK	1.0572	2.7810	1.0000	1.2280	0.2862	1.4056	0.8874	0.1088	1.8819	1.7819	17.8190	0.2222	0.2222	0.2222	0.2222	0.2222
FRANCE FRANC	1.3559	2.2821	0.8157	1.0000	0.2432	1.1457	0.7239	0.0920	1.6000	1.5000	15.0000	0.2105	0.2105	0.2105	0.2105	0.2105
UK POUND	5.6913	9.2886	3.3537	4.1116	1.0000	4.7148	2.9762	0.3670	6.5700	6.1700	61.7000	0.2500	0.2500	0.2500	0.2500	0.2500
YEN	118.5900	198.5998	71.1312	67.2049	21.2097	1.0000	63.1254	718.5900	136.5446	136.5446	1365.4460	0.0037	0.0037	0.0037	0.0037	0.0037
SWISS FRANC	1.6787	3.1113	1.1289	1.3615	0.3380	1.5840	1.0000	11.3782	2.2045	2.2045	22.0450	0.0246	0.0246	0.0246	0.0246	0.0246
ITALY LIRA	0.0568	13.3412	4.8319	5.8238	1.4026	0.7530	4.2850	1.0000	15.4380	15.4380	154.3800	0.0001	0.0001	0.0001	0.0001	0.0001
NETHERLAND GUILDER	34.3670	56.9483	20.8256	25.2664	6.1501	29.9895	18.3036	208.2848	40.3367	40.3367	403.3670	0.0024	0.0024	0.0024	0.0024	0.0024
SPAIN PESO	1.6234	2.6885	0.9737	1.1937	0.2978	1.3688	0.8641	0.8323	1.3187	1.3187	13.1870	0.0166	0.0166	0.0166	0.0166	0.0166
PORTUGAL ESCUDO	2.0037	4.6432	1.8817	2.0817	0.5014	2.3642	1.4924	16.9822	3.2981	3.2981	32.9810	0.0003	0.0003	0.0003	0.0003	0.0003
GREECE DRACHMA	2.0378	3.3743	1.2229	1.4885	0.3645	1.7154	1.0847	12.5351	2.5074	2.5074	25.0740	0.0001	0.0001	0.0001	0.0001	0.0001
CYPRUS POUND	11.7340	19.4327	7.0381	8.6286	2.0986	8.8466	6.3456	71.0738	12.8074	12.8074	128.0740	0.0001	0.0001	0.0001	0.0001	0.0001
AUSTRIAN SHEQEL	1.5456	2.5587	0.9271	1.1386	0.2784	1.3033	0.8227	9.3618	1.8187	1.8187	18.1870	0.0001	0.0001	0.0001	0.0001	0.0001
CANADIAN DOLLAR	0.4898	1.4074	0.5097	0.6248	0.1520	0.7186	0.4524	5.1475	1.0000	1.0000	10.0000	0.0001	0.0001	0.0001	0.0001	0.0001

CENTRAL BANK BULLETIN

DEPOSIT INTEREST RATES

CURRENCY	1 YEAR	3 MONTH	6 MONTH	1 YEAR
US DOLLAR	5.0000	4.8700	4.7100	4.6200
EURO	6.4700	6.3100	6.0800	5

HOROSCOPE

FORECAST FOR DECEMBER, THURSDAY 10, 1998

By Linda C. Black, Tribune Media Services, Inc.

ARIES: (March 21 to April 19) You'd better hustle again today, and pay attention, because conditions could change quickly. Something you planned to go one way could veer off in a different direction. If you're on top of the situation, there won't be a problem. If you're off playing, however, more damage could be done than you want to think about. Be forewarned, and be prepared.

TAURUS: (April 20 to May 20) You've been having complications concerning money you share with someone else. It could be the household account, your credit cards or even loans or investments. Take heart. Things will be much easier over the next few weeks than they've been for the last few weeks. Meanwhile, you may have to do a bit of juggling.

GEMINI: (May 21 to June 21) You've probably noticed some confusion in your relationships, and maybe hurt feelings or a misunderstanding. Those will clear up in the next few days. You may not have much time for discussion today anyway. Something you thought was headed one way will go another way instead. Allow a little extra time for whatever you have in mind.

CANCER: (June 22 to July 21) You're pushing yourself to try something difficult. It looks like you'll pull it off for your efforts, too, which makes the whole process more fun. There's more good news: Mercury is going direct today. That means a lot of problems will start to clear up all by themselves. Isn't it wonderful when that happens?

LEO: (July 22 to August 21) Mercury is going direct today. For you, it's affecting your romance and relationships with children. If you've been noticing disagreements in that area for the last couple weeks, you can blame it on retrograde Mercury. That's a perfect scapegoat, but only to a point. There does come a time when the messes have to be cleaned up, and that time is now.

VIRGO: (August 22 to September 22) Mercury, your ruling planet, has been retrograde for weeks. That's like having your ankles tied together; it's hard to get anywhere quickly. Now, Mercury is going direct. All the planning and hoping and sweating you've been doing lately is going to pay off. All of a sudden you'll know what you need to do. The rest will be easy.

LIBRA: (September 23 to October 22) Somebody's looking over your shoulder, criticizing your every move. Well, try to stifle that comment if you can. You're very good at learning right now, and you can afford to be generous with your attention. Yes, you can even afford to learn something from a person you don't like. Such folks are the ones who often teach us the most.

SCORPIO: (October 23 to November 21) Mercury has been retrograde in your second house of money, botching things up. It's been helping you make mistakes in your math, causing you to think you have more than you do, making checks get lost in the mail, etc. Mercury finally goes direct today — what a relief! This will help you dream up more ways to make money.

SAGITTARIUS: (November 22 to December 21) People have been thinking about you lately because you've been looking so good. The barrier to communication you've been struggling with is starting to dissolve. You'll be able to speak your mind clearly and more authentically than ever. Share your insights again today, and you could instigate a transformation. You can see what's been missing, and you're right.

CAPRICORN: (December 22 to January 20) You had some sort of foreboding about a project you're getting into. You weren't quite sure how to go about it, but the starting to fade. Now you're realizing that it doesn't matter if you have everything planned out exactly. All you need is a rough plan and a sound grasp of your basic objective. Now it's time to take action.

AQUARIUS: (January 21 to February 19) If you focus on details today, you can find the money you need. You're not sure just how to go about it. You've tried everything you know about, but this looks like something you didn't know about. How will you figure out where it is? That's easy. Just look somewhere you've never looked before!

PISCES: (February 20 to March 20) An idea that looks obvious to you could be incoherently to somebody else. That's hard for you to imagine. You tend to think other people know it all. Well, Pisces is the sign of genius, so the odds are pretty good that they don't, and you do. There are other things they can offer, however. teamwork is required.

HOROSCOPE

FORECAST FOR FRIDAY, DECEMBER 11, 1998

By Linda C. Black, Tribune Media Services, Inc.

ARIES: (March 21 to April 19) The better you feel about yourself, the more apt you are to do something that will benefit not only yourself, but others as well. In fact, the surest way to enrich yourself is to concentrate on doing something that directly benefits other people. What goes around comes around, remember?

TAURUS: (April 20 to May 20) It should be easy for you to learn for the next few weeks, and travel should be more fun, too. There may still be a few hassles this morning. You'll have to run a few errands before you can dive into a project you're anxious to begin. Minimize the inconvenience by calling ahead before you drive all over town.

GEMINI: (May 21 to June 21) You could get the money you've been wanting, but it won't be a gift. It's more like financing for a big item, such as a car or house. Have you been thinking along those lines? Well, think more seriously, because conditions are moving in that direction. The whole first part of the year will be good for you financially, especially if you've done the homework.

CANCER: (June 22 to July 21) Your family may be missing you if you've been away recently. Let them know they're still number one in your heart by fussing over them outrageously today, even if you can't be with them. Do that by calling, leaving notes and bringing home a treat tonight. Over the weekend, spoil them rotten. They love it when you do that.

LEO: (July 22 to August 21) There's more work coming in, and it's OK with you. Others may be experiencing the pressure more intensely, however. So make sure you do your best to keep things on an even keel. If you bring in doughnuts on a regular basis, don't forget that now. Whatever works to keep things stable and familiar today will be greatly appreciated.

VIRGO: (August 22 to September 22) How can you take \$10 and stretch it into \$10 without one of those really neat colour copy machines? You're going to shop wisely. You're good at that, and you've got a friend who likes to do it, too. If you can't get together with this person for a shopping excursion, at least you can talk on the phone.

LIBRA: (September 23 to October 23) You are even more charming, attractive and lovable than usual, and a little more assertive, too. You're not going to just stand back and be admired by the throng. You're going to speak up and let them know that you are intelligent as well as good looking. Might as well. Same price.

SCORPIO: (October 24 to November 21) Go through your little black book and look up a few people you haven't talked to in years. This is a lot more fun than writing letters. You're more of a nonverbal communicator, but today you could communicate effectively over the telephone. All you have to do is make the call, then listen. Your friend will do all the talking.

SAGITTARIUS: (November 22 to December 21) Meet with friends to take action on a project you can do together. You're all pretty powerful alone, but you're not going to be able to do this one all by yourself, that's alone. In fact, it might be too for all of you to do. That's OK. Just get more people on your team.

CAPRICORN: (December 22 to January 20) You know how to receive love, and to give love, but during the next few weeks, you could be simulating coming from love, and looking at the whole world from there. This may seem a little uncomfortable at first, but you'll get used to it. There's nothing more empowering than a structure built on love, and you're the perfect person to design it.

AQUARIUS: (January 20 to February 18) Travel looks imminent. If you can get off early today, you can start your weekend now. Looks like you're up for it, if you can make the scheduling arrangements. Whether you can or not, don't forget to call a distant friend. You inspire each other, and right now it looks like that other person could use a little of your good advice.

PISCES: (February 19 to March 20) Put your financial affairs in order today. It's going to be an excellent weekend for shopping, once you know how it's going to be. You have and how much you can afford to spend. You should know how much you need to make, to pay for everything. That'll come in handy if you happen to be discussing bonuses with your employer.

Birth Stone of December: Turquoise — Zircon

GCC states extend oil cuts for an extra six months

'The age of abundance is over and will not return,' warns Saudi Arabia

ABU DHABI (AFP) — Gulf Arab oil producers decided Wednesday to persist with output cuts for an extra six months, until the end of 1999, and called on other producers to follow suit.

The move will maintain some 1.285 million barrels per day (bpd) off total Gulf Arab production levels, of which more than half will come from OPEC heavyweight Saudi Arabia.

The Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) leaders, at the end of a three-day summit, also urged Iraq to respect all U.N. resolutions and blamed the Baghdad government for the suffering of its people under sanctions.

The Gulf states "pledge to extend for an extra six months, until the end of 1999, their reductions in production," rather than June as agreed by OPEC earlier this year, the GCC said in a final statement.

The Gulf states are "anxious to see the market stabilise and prices

improve," and the leaders urged OPEC and non-OPEC producers to "take similar measures to ensure the stability of the oil market."

But the leaders failed to agree any new production cuts. Both Kuwait and Algeria, which assumed the OPEC presidency in November have called for further cuts of 1.5 million bpd.

"If other countries respect their commitments to reduce output, the GCC will be ready to take adequate measure with other producer countries to restore stability to the rest of the market," the statement added.

The statement followed a meeting of oil ministers from Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates Tuesday on the sidelines of the Abu Dhabi summit.

Between them the GCC states control 45 per cent of the world's proven crude reserves and 20 per cent of global oil production.

OPEC — of which GCC states

Kuwait, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the UAE are members — has shaved 2.6 million bpd from its total production, although compliance has been patchy.

Non-OPEC Oman and other producers outside the cartel agreed on total cuts of 500,000 bpd. Bahrain, which does not export any crude, did not join the cuts.

During OPEC's November meeting in Vienna, oil ministers failed to take new measures to combat plunging crude prices, postponing a decision until their next meeting in March.

Saudi Arabia, the world's largest oil producer, has been unwilling to agree on new cuts until existing reductions are fully complied with.

On Tuesday, the International Energy Agency said OPEC members had only complied with about 81 per cent of pledged cuts in November. The UAE has accused non-GCC producers of overproducing.

Saudi Crown Prince Abdullah Ben

Abdel Aziz, meanwhile, urged the Gulf leaders not to "sit with our arms crossed while our main sources of revenues are violently rocked."

"The age of abundance is over and will not return. We must all get used to a new lifestyle that does not rely entirely on the state. It needs the private sector to assume part of the burden," he said.

On the political front, the six monarchies "underlined the necessity for Iraq to respect, without conditions, all the Security Council resolutions."

They singled out U.N. resolutions to eliminate Iraqi weapons of mass destruction and the release of Kuwaiti prisoners, while accusing Baghdad of provoking crises over arms inspections.

Implementation of the resolutions "will lead to an easing of the sufferings of the Iraqi people, for which the Iraqi government is entirely responsible," the leaders said.

Turning to Iran, Gulf Arab leaders urged Tehran to withdraw from three strategic islands also claimed by the UAE.

"The GCC calls on Iran to halt its occupation of the islands of Abu Musa, and the Greater and Lesser Tunbs, and its policy of fait accompli," the leaders said.

They called on Iran to respond favourably to the numerous appeals from the UAE to find a peaceful solution to the dispute.

The Gulf leaders welcomed the Israeli-Palestinian Wye River peace accord signed on Oct. 23 and called on Israel to fully apply the agreement without delay.

But "the GCC affirms that peace will not be achieved without the recovery by the Palestinians of their legitimate rights, starting with the establishment of an independent state with Jerusalem as its capital."

Japan in for more gloom, but worries ease slightly

TOKYO (R) — The Japanese economy is likely to get another dose of gloom next week when the Bank of Japan (BOJ) releases its "tankan" survey, but it may show that sentiment among businesses, at least, may be close to hitting bottom.

All but one of 17 private economists and institutions surveyed by Reuters predicted the quarterly tankan would show sentiment at major manufacturers and non-manufacturers worsening from the previous survey in September and failing to achieve levels forecast then.

But compared with a sharp deterioration in sentiment seen between the June and September surveys, most economists expect a limited worsening in

December.

"The pace of the fall will slow," said Yoshito Sakakibara, a senior economist at Goldman Sachs.

The Reuters poll produced an average diffusion index reading of minus 56 for major manufacturers, with a range of minus 30 to minus 66.

The diffusion index measures the percentage of companies reporting favorable business conditions minus those reporting unfavorable conditions. A negative reading meaning pessimistic firms outnumber optimistic ones.

The results of the latest poll are lower than the September tankan result of minus 51, and are also below the minus 46 that the companies forecast in Sep-

tember for December. But the fall is less sharp than the tumble in September from June's minus 38. The economists predicted on average the diffusion index for major non-manufacturers would be minus 39, with a range of minus 34 to minus 45. In the September tankan, non-manufacturers registered minus 36 and were forecast to be at minus 31 for December. The June result was minus 28.

The BOJ will release the results of the December tankan on December 14 at 8:50 a.m. (2350 GMT December 13).

Economists said the effect of the government's economic package announced in April and hopes for its latest package adopted in November may have kept

sentiment from worsening.

"The effect of the April package has emerged and is limiting the degree of the worsening," said Mamoru Yamazaki, a senior economist with Paribas Capital Markets.

Akiyoshi Takumori, a chief economist at Sakura Securities, and the only economist expecting an improvement for major manufacturers in December, said some business leaders have recently expressed optimism about the economy, adding: "The tankan may reflect views that the economy has bottomed out."

But economists said the economy was still far from a recovery, and that it was merely worsening more slowly.

"You still can't judge it as

improving. Its direction has not changed," said Goldman's Sakakibara.

Economists expect major firms, both manufacturers and non-manufacturers, to cut planned capital spending for the current business year to next March. Many see major firms' capital spending dropping by around four percent, down from the 2.3 per cent fall forecast in the September tankan.

Some economists also said the yen's recent appreciation may have depressed sentiment among exporters.

"The yen has risen about 10 per cent from September and there are dark clouds hanging over the outlook among exporters," said Tomoko Fujii, an economist at Salomon Smith Barney.

Others remained skeptical about the effect of the government's economic package. "Public works spending alone usually has minimal impact on business confidence," said Andrew Shipley, an economist with Schroders.

Economists said that while the focus will be on the BOJ's policy board meeting on December 15, the day after the tankan, the survey's results are unlikely to force the BOJ to change the discount rate, currently at a record low 0.5 per cent.

They said the central bank would like to save the option of a rate cut to brace itself against possible turmoil in overseas economies, especially a downturn in the United States resulting from problems in Latin American economies.

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Asian Games

Jordan wins silver, bronze medals

Asian Handball Federation accepts Kingdom's complaint

By Aileen Bannayan
in Amman and Jordan
sports media reporters
in Bangkok

JORDAN'S TAEKWON-DO team Wednesday won two medals when Ala'a Kutkut won silver and Mohammad Farajeh added a bronze on the third day of competition at the 13th Asian Games currently under way in Bangkok.

Kutkut dedicated the medal to His Majesty King Hussein, Crown Prince Hassan, and all Jordanians expressing pride in seeing the Kingdom's flag raised at the Games where 41 Asian nations are competing in the century's last sporting event.

Kutkut won the 63-67 kilogramme category when she lost 3-0 to World champion Cho Hyang Mi of Korea who took the gold.

Farajeh settled for bronze in the 73-78 kilogramme category after beating Kuwait's Imad Ahmad but later lost to Korea's Ryu Keun-Moo 5-1.

The two medals brought to three the total number of medals Jordan won so far after Hussein Tahleh, a gold medalist at the Pan-Arab Games, took the silver medal in taekwondo on the first day of competition.

Ahlan Bino, a Pan-Arab Games bronze medalist, lost her match after many similar controversial calls which have plagued the taekwondo event.

The Kingdom's coach Chen expressed happiness at the level of Jordanian players stressing that Bino's loss was a result of standard refereeing.

The taekwondo event concludes today with Ibrahim Aqil, who won the gold at the recently concluded World Military

Games in Houston, Texas, competing.

Mohammad Abul Ruz, and Nancy Hindi, both silver medalists at the last Pan-Arab Games in Beirut also compete today.

In boxing: Basel Hindawi lost his bout against an Indian opponent after the referee stopped the match when Hindawi received several punches to the face.

Hindawi, bronze medalist at the Pan-Arab Games, was favoured to win medals as Jordan's boxers are competing alongside 180 athletes from 31 nations in the event where the Kingdom pins high hopes on Mohammad Abu Khadijeh, who won three gold medals at the 8th Pan-Arab Games.

Jordanian delegation officials ordered his return home Wednesday. He is expected to serve a two-year suspension, and will therefore miss the Pan-Arab Games.

Khawaldeh was the first Jordanian to win three bronze medals in one event at the 8th Pan-Arab Games in Beirut last summer.

At the 1994 Asian Games in Hiroshima, 11 Chinese athletes, including seven swimmers, failed drug tests for steroids.

Jordan's Khawaldeh tests positive, expelled from Games

By a Staff Reporter

JORDAN'S TOP weightlifter, Ayed Khawaldeh, who was favoured to secure medals for the Kingdom, was revealed late Wednesday as the first drugs cheat of the 13th Asian Games currently under way in Bangkok.

Khawaldeh was immediately disqualified and expelled from the Games village by the Olympic Council of Asia (OCA) which held an emergency meeting to discuss the case Wednesday night.

AFP reported that Khawaldeh, 25, who finished seventh among fifteen participants in the 56-kilogramme class, was found to have taken the diuretic Triamterene.

Khawaldeh, set a new Arab record and had expressed hope to win gold at the Pan-Arab Games.

He was caught in a random test after the event, which was won by Lan Shizang of China. Khawaldeh said his Chinese coach has instructed him to take the medicine during the West Asian Games in Tehran and during another championship in Algeria last year, and did not know that it contained a banned substance.

Jordanian delegation officials ordered his return home Wednesday. He is expected to serve a two-year suspension, and will therefore miss the Pan-Arab Games.

Khawaldeh was the first Jordanian to win three bronze medals in one event at the 8th Pan-Arab Games in Beirut last summer.

At the 1994 Asian Games in Hiroshima, 11 Chinese athletes, including seven swimmers, failed drug tests for steroids.

Jordan began competition in shooting and swimming Thursday. Pan-Arab Games bronze medalist Hana Majaj is the sole swimmer representing Jordan.

OCA meetings begin: On the sidelines of the event, Jordan Olympic Committee (JOC) Vice-Chairman Mouaffaq Al Fawwaz headed the country's delegation at the meetings of the Olympic Council of Asia (OCA).

The meeting discussed the 2002 Asian Games in Pusan, South Korea.

During the meetings, Jordanian officials will update OCA Arab states on preparations for the Pan-Arab Games. They will also meet officials from the organising committee of the Sydney Olympic Games as well as Japanese Olympic officials charged with sports marketing who would be beneficial in that aspect of the Pan-Arab Games.

Meanwhile, the Asian Handball Federation (AHF) has accepted Jordan's complaint of disqualification from the World Cup handball finals where Saudi Arabia took first place

while Jordan came second on points with Kuwait and Bahrain.

The organising committee gave Kuwait the runner-up spot after disqualifying Bahrain on a technicality.

The AHF decided to present the matter to the International Handball Federation whose ruling will be final for both Jordan and Kuwait.

The Kingdom has 19 officials and 37 athletes in the last sporting event of the century where only Saudi Arabia and Afghanistan are missing the event. Jordan is competing in 11 sports: athletics, boxing, bowling, gymnastics, judo, karate, shooting, squash, swimming, weightlifting and taekwondo.

Jordan is yet to win gold at the Asian Games. In the past two participations in the Seoul '86 and Hiroshima '94, Jordan's sole medals were achieved through taekwondo with three silver and five bronze

medals.

Jordan's 56-member delegation have joined 40 other nations at the century's final sporting event.

Jordan is represented by the best athletes in their respective sport.

The athletics team begins competition Saturday headed by Fakhreddin Fuad — a gold medalist in the Pan-Arab Games high jump.

The team had a training camp in Qatar where Fuad achieved 215 centimetres, and just came short of his record of 222.

Teammate Mohammad Abdul Baqi set a new Jordanian record in the triple jump with 15.53—18 centimetres more than his previous mark.

The delegation also includes karate bronze medalist Butheina Mahsiri.

Jordan is not taking part in team sports — notably soccer, handball and basketball due to reason pertaining to their respective federations.



Cho Hyang-Mi (front) of South Korea delivers a kick to Ala'a Kutkut (back) of Jordan during the final of the women's taekwondo welterweight division. Cho won the gold while Kutkut took silver (AFP photo)



China's Zhou Yilin competes in front of the judges in preliminary competition in the men's 3 metre platform diving event Wednesday. Zhou leads the competition after 11 dives (AP photo)

I'll beat Jayasinghe — China's Li

BANGKOK (AFP) — China's major hope for the Asian Games 100metre crown vowed here on Wednesday to defeat drug-tainted Sri Lankan star Susanthika Jayasinghe and win the title of Asia's fastest woman.

The 21-year-old, speaking after flying into Bangkok, said she was not worried about Jayasinghe's boast that she would take both Asian sprints.

"I don't mind what Jayasinghe said," Li said. "I am ready to beat all rivals."

Li, who holds the Asian records for both 100 and 200m, said she had been training hard over the past two months.

Jayasinghe, the world 200m silver medalist, has been under a cloud since failing a drugs test in April but has been allowed to run at the Games by the International Amateur Athletic Federation while her case is investigated.

She will be stripped of any medal she wins here as she is found guilty by an arbitration panel next year.

Li broke Asia's 100 and 200m record with two stunning performances of 10.79 and 22.01 seconds in last year's Chinese National Games in Shanghai.

Jayasinghe is normally regarded as a specialist of the longer sprint but she

recorded a personal best 100m of 11.28sec at the national championships last month.

She said on her arrival: "I won't just win the 100 and the 200 metres — I'll win them in record time. There's only one good sprinter here and that's me."

Li's coach Zhang Rongwei admitted that Li's main rival was Jayasinghe but added: "We are not

afraid of Jayasinghe. We only fear that other little known runners will cause a surprise."

Zhang predicted that Li would run inside 11.20 in the 100m and 22.33 in the 200.

Li first came to world attention last year when she finished the season second fastest behind world champion Marion Jones of the United States.

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Lowest point on Earth hosts raft race



THE AMMAN Marriott Hotel has again staged one of its many charitable events. The 4th Dead Sea annual Raft Race took place recently. Nine spectacular manmade rafts were competing for the finish line. In the heavy waters of the Dead Sea. All proceeds of the event go to the Al Hussein Society for the Rehabilitation of the Physically Challenged, as a part of the Amman Marriott's ongoing commitment to enhance the awareness of helping those in need.

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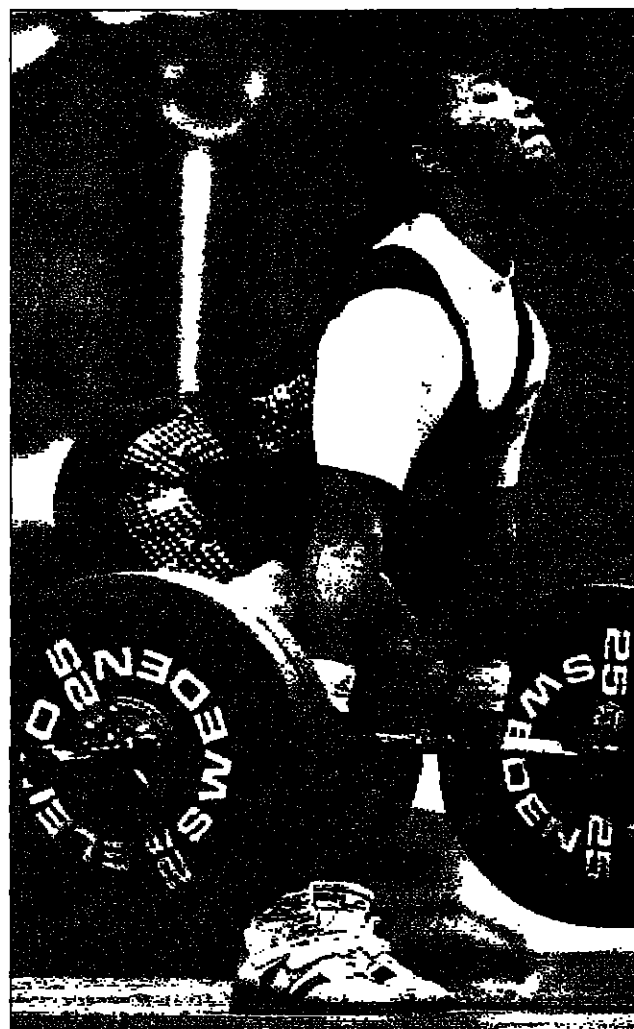
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China's Chen Yangqing lifts 123.5 kgs off the floor on her way to a gold medal and a short-lived world record in the women's 58 kg clean and jerk competition at the 13th Asian Games in Bangkok. Chen's record lift was broken moments later by Song-Hui of North Korea with 125 kgs, but Chen still won the event on combined lifts (AFP photo)

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Listings for films and showing times as received by cinemas and their advertising agencies.

Little Tennis brings lifetime sport to Jordanian children

By a Staff Reporter

AMMAN — Jordanian children aged 3-10 now have the chance to learn tennis — the professional way — through a programme called Little Tennis, established by the United States Professional Tennis Association (USPTA).

The Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA) has already hosted the national tennis programme to introduce young children to the sport in a fun, group environment.

After the enthusiastic response and success of the first four courses, the organisers now plan to start a winter indoor season Jan. 2.

USPTA Little Tennis, a series of high energy, on-court activities which offers children the chance to learn basic tennis and motor skills that start with playing on short courts with foam balls, small rackets and other junior-sized equipment.

The programme offers athletic instruction, games and social activities and is run by local tennis-teaching professionals.

The programme director, Rafat Al Qaisi who has been a USPTA member for 5 years, said four seasons' had already been held ever since it was initiated in 1997.

Children of all skill levels are welcome in Little Tennis, whether a child has experience of not, the tennis related games and



One of the participants in the Little Tennis programme attempts a return with a foam ball

USPTA
Little
Tennis

activities provide a healthy and fun introduction to the games. The programme stresses fun rather than competition," Qaisi told the Jordan Times.

He stressed that children would get the quality training needed to progress from learning motor skills to racket skills and then playing skills.

"It is a very effective programme. It keeps the kids motivated. I'm sure it will provide a good base for the Kingdom's future tennis players," he added.

Qaisi said the current session would conclude Dec. 11 with a competition among over 100 partici-

pants. USPTA Little Tennis is a great way to introduce children to tennis, the sport for a lifetime, says Time Heckler, CEO of USPTA.

World No. 1 Pete Sampras, a sponsor of the programme notes: "We need to make tennis easy, fun and exciting for kids and that's just what USPTA Little Tennis does. It's getting more children and parents into the sport and that's good for the game. Who knows how many further champions we'll have thanks to this programme."

Little Tennis was designed by the USPTA and is sponsored by Wilson racket sports.

The USPTA is the world's oldest and largest association of tennis-teaching professionals. It was established in 1927 and has more than 10,000 members.

France, Italy and Spain dominate UEFA Cup

LONDON (R) — The quarterfinals of the UEFA Cup have a distinctly Latin flavour with France, Spain and Italy providing all eight quarterfinalists of the competition.

AS Roma, Bologna and Parma of Italy will go into next Wednesday's draw in Geneva along with Olympique Marseille, Bordeaux, and Olympique Lyon of France.

Celta Vigo of Spain are also through, joined by Atletico Madrid who beat fellow-Spaniards Real Sociedad 5-3 on aggregate after extra time.

It is the first time in the history of the competition that all clubs from northern Europe have been eliminated by this stage.

Parma set the tone for the day when they came from behind to beat Rangers of Scotland 3-1 in an afternoon kickoff for a 4-2 aggregate win.

Parma's Serie A rivals Bologna and Roma also reached the last eight even though neither team won their second leg matches.

Bologna lost 1-0 at Real Betis in Spain but came through 4-2 on aggregate while Roma drew 2-2 at FC Zurich to advance 3-2 on aggregate.

No French team has ever won the UEFA Cup but Lyon, Marseille and Bordeaux will all try to put that right next spring.

Alain Cavaglia scored a hat-trick as Olympique Lyon reached the quarterfinals of a European competition for the first time since the 1967-68 season when they won an outstanding match 4-3 at Club Brugge.

The game produced an astonishing blitz of six goals in 21 minutes midway through the second half.

Bordeaux came through after a 0-0 draw with Grasshoppers saw them qualify on the away goal rule after drawing 3-3 in the first leg two weeks ago. Grasshoppers had Mihai Tararache sent off after 78 minutes.

A fierce battle between Marseille and Monaco ended in a 1-0 win for the home side who won with a 71st minute goal from Titi Camara which put Marseille 3-2 ahead over the two legs.

Meanwhile, Celta Vigo of Spain completed a double of victories over English teams with a comprehensively stylish win over Liverpool at Anfield.

Although they only won 1-0 on the night thanks to a fine 57th minute individual strike from Israeli international Haim Revivo, Vigo won 4-1 on aggregate for their second victory over an English side following their second round win over Aston Villa.

There was plenty of drama in Spain where Atletico Madrid beat Real Sociedad 5-3 on aggregate thanks to two goals in two minutes midway through the first period of extra time.

NBA cancels All-Star Game

NEW YORK (Agencies) — The All-Star Game is the latest casualty of the NBA lockout that is in its 161st day.

NBA Commissioner David Stern announced today that the labour stalemate has forced the league to cancel the showcase event, which was scheduled for February 14th at the First Union Center in Philadelphia. It marks the first time the league has canceled the All-Star Game, which had been held every year since 1951.

"The fact that the entire season is in such jeopardy at this late date because of the labour dispute prevents us from having an All-Star Game," said Stern. "It would be unfair for us to ask the city of Philadelphia and all our business partners to move forward with any more commitments, plans or expenditures when there is so much uncertainty surrounding the season. In light of the continuing labour dispute, we really are left with no choice other than to cancel the All-Star Weekend."

In addition, USA Today reported that the balance of the season is expected to be canceled by Christmas if an agreement cannot be reached.

The NBA would be the first pro league to lose an entire season because of a labour dispute.

Stern refused to set any "drop dead" date today, but again acknowledged the possibility of canceling the entire

season.

"We don't want to lose the season, but the season will run out and cancel itself," said Stern.

Today's announcement will "cheat millions of fans and the city of Philadelphia out of a wonderful spectacle," said NBA Players Association (NPBA) executive director Billy Hunter.

"Unfortunately for the owners, their effort to further intimidate the players will not succeed," he continued. "We already have offered unprecedented concessions and are willing to negotiate even further, but we will only accept a deal that is fair to both sides."

The Philadelphia Inquirer reported that the cancellation of the All-Star Game would cost the city an estimated \$35 million in revenue.

The city's hotels, which set aside 5,300 rooms for the NBA, had expected to take in more than \$6 million.

The "Jam Session," a four-day event of displays and interactive events that was expected to draw as many as 100,000 people to the Philadelphia Convention Centre, had already been called off.

"We apologise to everyone in Philadelphia, but we promise to bring the All-Star Weekend back as soon as possible," Stern assured.

Philadelphia is not expected to get

another chance to host the gala until 2002. Next season's game has been awarded to the Golden State Warriors and the 2001 game is likely to go to the Washington Wizards.

No new negotiations are scheduled between owners and the Players Association. On Thursday, the two sides met for 10 1/2 hours in New York but reported little progress.

Stern again said he would not accept a union offer to send the talks to mediation.

"We have had plenty of dialogue," said Stern. "What we have is an absolutely different view of the situation."

A total of 250 games already have been lost to the lockout through today and with a month needed to sign players and hold training camps, an additional 200 will be canceled before even an abbreviated season can begin.

"There is still enough time to make up for the damage caused to our sport, but only if the owners turn constructive rather than destructive," Hunter said.

On Monday, the locked out players announced plans to stage a charity game to be played December 19th in Atlantic City, New Jersey.

Gymnast Moceanu returns to court

HOUSTON (AP) — Fearful for her life, gymnast Dominique Moceanu is returning to court to have a restraining order against her father made permanent.

The 17-year-old was granted a temporary restraining order against her father a week ago. She has asked state District Judge John Montgomery to upgrade that order and make it a permanent injunction.

Both Moceanu and her parents, Dumitru and Camelia Moceanu, are expected to attend today's hearing.

If Moceanu's adolescence seemed unbearable, it apparently was idyllic compared to the gymnast's new life as a grownup.

Since Oct. 28, when a judge granted her request for adult status, the 1996 gold medalist says she's endured verbal threats and stalking by her father. Police are also investigating a private investigator's claim that Dumitru Moceanu offered to pay

\$10,000 to have a friend and her coach killed.

"The threat of danger from my father hangs over me every day," the gymnast said in court papers filed a week ago for the restraining order.

Messages left Tuesday with her father's attorney, Katherine Scardino, and at his workplace were not returned to The Associated Press.

Moceanu has, so far, declined the AP's request for an interview about her court battles.

What began as a teen-age athlete's fight for control over her millions in earnings has escalated into a vitriolic fight threatening to shatter her family for good.

The stormy relationship between father and daughter caught public notice in late October, when she fled from her home with the help of Marcy and Brian Huggins and her coach, Luminita Miscenco.

Huggins, befriended the Olympian while performing some work

at the \$4 million Moceanu Gymnastics Inc. facility north of Houston.

The Huggins have also received a restraining order against Dumitru Moceanu.

Encouraged by fellow athletes, including gymnast Kurt Thomas, to take more control of her finances, Moceanu dogged her father and mother for answers about how her earnings, secured in a trust fund that they alone have access to, were being spent.

"I kill myself training and going to school, and what is he doing with my money?" Moceanu told the Houston Chronicle at the time. "They haven't been working since 1996. Where does their income come from? Me."

After months of stonewalling, the young athlete decided that her only alternative was the courtroom. With her coach by her side, the gymnast gathered her courage and phoned an attorney from a shopping mall pay phone. Within

days, she filed suit against her parents, asking a judge for adult status so she could legally begin asking for an accounting of how her trust fund was spent.

She also revealed how her every move was monitored by her father, that she had yet to go unchaperoned on a date. She also revealed that her father has hit her "a couple of times" and that she "never had a childhood."

Dumitru and Camelia Moceanu, both Romanian immigrants, fueled her Olympic dream starting at age 3. They brought her to Houston so she could be coached by Bela Karolyi.

At 14, Moceanu was the youngest American ever to win an Olympic gold medal in gymnastics during the 1996 Summer Games in Atlanta.

With earnings generated by public appearances and competition, her parents built a 70,000 square-foot gym just north of Houston a few years ago.

Top women confirm for Australian Open

MELBOURNE (AFP) — Four-time champion Monica Seles, former World No. 1 Steffi Graf, new queen Lindsay Davenport and the dethroned Martina Hingis will head the strongest women's field for years at the Australian Tennis Open this January.

With Venus and Serena Williams, Anna Kournikova and the almost forgotten Jennifer Capriati rounding out the drawcards, tournament director Paul McNamee said it would be the best women's competition since the Open moved to Melbourne Park more than a decade ago.

"These women are young, marketed aggressively and have raised the stakes in fashion and can back it all up with the way they play," McNamee said Wednesday.

"I'll also be interested to see how Jennifer goes, because I coached her for a short while."

This time last year, Graf and Seles both entered the Open yet didn't play.

"Last year we were hoping they would come but they both had a cloud over them so it was no surprise when they pulled out," McNamee said.

"This time they have both shown cause why they want to be at this Open."

"Steffi is trying to challenge Margaret Court's grand slam record and Monica wants to continue her unbeaten run in Australia."

"She has never lost on Australian soil."

Providing neither pulls out before the start of the Open on January 18, it will be the

first time the pair has played here since 1993.

Seles, the 1996 New South Wales Open champion, has won the title each of the four times she's played and is yet to lose a match at the Hopman Cup.

On the men's side, McNamee said the top 30 ranked players had also entered the event.

Pete Sampras still has Roy Emerson's career grand slam record in his sight and Australia's U.S. Open champion Patrick Rafter and Mark Philippoussis are certain to be seeded.

Sampras needs to win one more grand slam title to draw level with Emerson, who won 12 Grand Slam titles.

Tyson promises to be 'good boy'

LOS ANGELES (R) — Laying off questions about his past misdeeds and vowing to be a "good boy," Mike Tyson on Tuesday announced he will fight South African Francois Botha in his first bout since a 1997 suspension for biting a chunk out of Evander Holyfield's ear.

Tyson, sporting a new, improved very relaxed attitude as he faced a room full of reporters and TV cameras, said he would be back in the ring on January 16 in Las Vegas against Botha, a former International Boxing Federation heavyweight champion.

"I'm sorry, but I've learned my lesson and I won't do that anymore," Tyson, 32, said with a grin when asked about the June 23, 1997 bout when he twice bit Holyfield's ears. "I'm a very good boy."

After the fight, Tyson was stripped of his license to fight in the Nevada State Athletic Commission for 18 months as a punishment.

In October, the former heavyweight champion convinced the Nevada State Athletic Commission to let him fight again after promising to undergo psychiatric therapy and "absolutely never" do it again.

The commissioners asked him to either give himself in the ring or be thrown out of the ring for good.

Tyson spend most of a raucous press conference on Tuesday poking fun at his bad-boy image and promoting his fight rather than answering serious questions.

Tyson, who at age 20 in 1986 became the youngest man ever to win the heavyweight title, even stood up for Botha, chiding a man at the press conference who shouted "He's a punk!" when the South African was introduced.

"Let's be nice to this guy today," Tyson said. "Let's all be nice. For anyone who didn't know, I'm on parole and I'm trying to be nice up here."

But, asked if he would fight Holyfield again or challenge for the heavy-



Former heavyweight champion Mike Tyson pauses during a news conference at the Hollywood Athletic Club in the Hollywood section of Los Angeles, for his upcoming fight against Francois Botha (AP photo)

weight belt again, he said: "The fact is, if the price is right, I'll fight a lion. I'm not here because I've been voted the nicest guy in the country."

And Tyson declined to answer when a reporter asked if he was worried about going back to prison — a reference to Tyson's December 1 "no contest" plea to assaulting two motorists in Maryland after a minor traffic crash.

He awaits sentencing in that case, which could affect his parole after spending three years in an Indiana prison for a rape conviction. One of his handlers cautioned reporters that Tyson would "not talk about pending litigation, so those are questions that can't be asked."

"I'm just happy to be here," said Tyson, clad in black and sporting a red

beret with a Harley Davidson Motorcycles logo. "I'm just here to fight."

Botha, meanwhile, promised a good bout against Tyson and warned that "I come to fight; I don't come to lay down."

"All of you who want to make deals with Mike Tyson might want to hold on, because you might lose a lot of money," Botha said. "You're in for a rude awakening."

Also in attendance at the press conference was former basketball great Earvin "Magic" Johnson, whose role as Tyson's advisor helped win over Nevada boxing officials.

Johnson declined to speculate when Tyson would fight for the title but said: "He's still the biggest in the world and no one will ever be bigger."

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Regent voices pride in Jordan's human rights achievements

By Francesca Ciriaci

AMMAN — HRH Crown Prince Hassan, the Regent, on Wednesday expressed pride in Jordan's achievements in the field of human rights.

Presiding over a ceremony at the new building of the Greater Amman Municipality commemorating the 50th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Regent stressed the human dimension of politics and warned against the dangers of believing that scientific and technological development, without respect for human dignity and human rights, could lead to real progress.

Crown Prince Hassan said the search for human ethics and the establishment of a universal code of conduct are the main challenges of the next millennium.

He told an audience of ambassadors from French-speaking countries, officials, and representatives of various non-governmental and U.N. organisations active in the field of human rights that the global "fight against terrorism, drug trafficking, and organised crime has showed that it is impossible to speak about freedoms without speaking about laws."

"In our age the media allow better understanding of each other's diversities," Prince Hassan said. "Let us hope that this age of science will lead us to an age of knowledge."

The Director of the Red Crescent Society in Jordan, Mohammad Hadid, and the representative of "Children of the World," Robert Sart, also addressed the ceremony, organised by the French Cultural Centre in cooperation with the Greater Amman Municipality.

Sart recalled the 1989 International Convention on the Rights of the Child, stressing that signatory states committed themselves to not only address the immediate physical needs of children and protect them from violence, abuse, and neglect, but also establish the conditions for the development of each child's full potential, in a climate of freedom of expression and social integration.

Hadid described the various activities of the Red Crescent in the Kingdom, and explained the movement's definition of peace, which he said was based on respect for freedoms, independence, national sovereignty, and human rights, as well as the fight against discrimination.

A young Jordanian student of French, Anas Samran, opened the ceremony with a call on all representatives of the international community to "respect the rights of the children of today, the adults of tomorrow."

Earlier, Prince Hassan unveiled a commemorative plaque on an imposing monument dominating the square of the Greater Amman Municipality complex, in Ras Al 'Ein. The monument, consisting of a white wall more than 20 metres tall and over 30 metres long, bears on one side the first article of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in French, Arabic, and English.

On the other side, a fresco by Belgian painter Paul de Gobert features 12 "windows" on two landscapes: the coast of Normandy and the red desert of Wadi Rum.



MORE CLASHES: Palestinians, one protecting his head under a cardboard box, duck as Israeli soldiers fire rubber-coated metal bullets during clashes outside Ramallah on Wednesday. Clashes erupted throughout the West Bank to mark the 11th anniversary of the uprising against Israel (AP photo)

Pinochet extradition case to go ahead

LONDON (R) — British Home Secretary Jack Straw ruled Wednesday that an extradition case against Augusto Pinochet could go ahead, saying the former Chilean dictator's age, health and status did not excuse him from court proceedings.

Straw, the country's interior minister, gave British courts the authority to proceed with a request from Spain asking for Pinochet's extradition on murder, torture and kidnapping charges dating from his 1973-1990 rule.

Straw's decision, announced in a home office statement, meant the 83-year-old general was expected to appear Friday at a magistrates' court in London for the formal start of extradition proceedings to Spain.

"I signed an authority to proceed in respect of Senator Pinochet today," Straw said in the statement. "The Spanish request for his extradition will now be considered by the courts."

But Straw's decision did not mean Pinochet would automatically be extradited and the case could drag on for months.

Pinochet is currently living under police guard in a luxury mansion west of London.

If after holding hearings on the case the courts decide in favour of extradition, Straw would be expected to make another formal decision on Pinochet's surrender to Spain. Pinochet's lawyers are expected to challenge the process every step of the way.

Rodrigo Penick, one of the Chilean exiles who have spent weeks demonstrating in London for Pinochet's extradition, called the decision "fantastic news."

He said: "I have tears in my eyes. I was always reluctant to predict what would happen because of the pressure by the Chilean government."

"Whatever happens now he [Pinochet] has been condemned internationally as a criminal."

Straw's move dashed the hopes of the Chilean government and Pinochet supporters who believed the minister would use his power under British law to stop the extradition process against Pinochet, who was arrested on Oct. 16.

Arafat determined to declare state

(Continued from page 1)

"Did I talk at Wye River about killers and thieves?" Arafat asked.

"There are many witnesses that the prisoners to be released would be from Fatah and the PFLP," he said, using the acronym for the leftist Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine.

"This was said in front of Netanyahu," he said, speaking of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. "We will not rest until they are with us. It will be our task."

Netanyahu reaffirmed on Tuesday that he would not order further West Bank withdrawals until Arafat publicly rescinds his threat to unilaterally declare a state.

Netanyahu also demanded that Arafat publicly admit that the Wye River accord does not require his government to release political prisoners, detainees he says have "Israeli blood on their hands."

U.S. special envoy Dennis Ross, who arrived in the region Tuesday to prepare for Clinton's visit, supported Netanyahu's interpretation of the Wye agreement on prisoners and called for an end to violent protests by Palestinians over the issue.

Washington has also called on Arafat to stop threatening to unilaterally declare a state.

Palestinian shot dead

(Continued from page 1)

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, struggling to beat back a right-wing challenge to his government's survival, has demanded the PNA put an end to anti-Israeli violence and said he was unlikely to go ahead with a promised West Bank pull-back next week.

In a speech to supporters in Hebron on Wednesday, Palestinian President Yasser Arafat said Israel had no right to stop him declaring an independent Palestinian state.

"They are telling us that we should not mention the word state," Arafat said.

"I told them we have already said the word, we have declared it already," he said, referring to the PLO's declaration in exile from Algiers in November 1988 of a Palestinian state.

Though Arafat avoided previous pledges to proclaim such a state unilaterally on May 4 next year — the end of a five-year interim period under the Oslo peace process — his comments were certain to anger Israeli leaders.

Israel carried out the first stage of the redeployment in late November in line with the Wye accord, which provides for a pullback from 13 per cent of the West Bank in three phases over three months.

But citing alleged Palestinian violations of the agreement, Netanyahu last week suspended further implementation of the interim accord.

U.S. Middle East envoy Dennis Ross was meeting Netanyahu and Arafat to prepare for a presidential journey starting on Saturday to Israeli and Palestinian-ruled areas.

Tehran pollution hits 'danger' level

TEHRAN (AFP) — Iranian authorities warned people to stay away from central Tehran on Wednesday as pollution levels went "beyond dangerous levels."

The Tehran weather office issued the warning, broadcast on state radio, adding that pollutant concentration levels had reached "critical" levels, and urged elderly people, allergy sufferers and children in particular to avoid the city centre.

The office said stable weather conditions over the past days had stopped thick smog from dispersing from the city, home to around 10 million people.

Tehran, one of the world's most polluted cities, is situated in a dip at the foot of the Alburz mountains and suffers from relatively poor air circulation.

The city's heavy traffic consists mostly of cars and buses that have been running for over 20 years, and often spew out a lethal cocktail of visible and invisible smoke and pollution.

The government has restricted traffic in the city centre, though this has merely prevented a further deterioration of current conditions.

The head of Iran's Air Quality Control Company, Peymaneh Hastei, said last year that up to 70 per cent of the pollution was caused by private vehicles, and estimated that about 4,000 people probably died every year as a result.

Iran, the world's second largest oil producer, currently charges drivers under 7 cents for a litre of petrol, leading to the careless use of vehicles.

Egyptian plane returns after foiled bid to divert to Libya

TUNIS (AFP) — An Egyptian aircraft headed back to Cairo Wednesday after a failed bid by passengers to divert it from its normal route to the Tunisian resort of Jerba to Tripoli in defiance of the U.N. air embargo on Libya.

The crew and all of the passengers who flew in to Tunisia 15 hours earlier were on the plane for the return journey to Egypt, airport officials said.

The plane, belonging to the private Egyptian firm AMC, was en route from the Yemeni capital Sanaa to the southern Tunisian island of Jerba when its Libyan and Yemeni passengers demanded to be flown to Libya.

An Egyptian security source said the plane had been hijacked soon after takeoff from Cairo and identified the aircraft as an EgyptAir plane chartered by AMC.

But the Tunisian civil aviation department insisted there had been no hijacking, just "a disagreement between the air-

line and the passengers who had chartered the plane."

"The plane's passengers refused to get off the plane at Jerba on the grounds that the contract they had signed to charter the plane showed Tripoli as the destination," the department said in a statement.

AMC's owner Sayyed Saber said that the pilot had refused to fly to Libya because of the six-year-old U.N. air embargo.

"The passengers asked the pilot to fly the plane to Tripoli but he refused, arguing that he needed a special authorisation from the United Nations," he told AFP after a radio contact with the plane's pilot.

He said the plane was carrying 151 passengers and had been hijacked by the Libyan ambassador in Beirut, Ali Mahmoud Maria, but Maria vigorously denied the claim. Saber added that the pilot had told him there was no violence on board the plane.

"There are two solutions: either the passengers leave the plane voluntarily or we get an exceptional permission from the U.N. fly to Libya," he said. Libya has been under a U.N. air and arms embargo since 1992 over its refusal to surrender for trial in Britain or the United States two Libyans suspected of masterminding the 1988 bombing of a U.S. airliner over Lockerbie in Scotland that killed 270 people.

Earlier this year London and Washington agreed to a long-standing Libyan demand for the two suspects to be tried in a third country.

Tripoli accepted the proposal in principle and U.N. chief Kofi Annan visited Libya last week to try to seal a deal.

In March 1996, three Egyptians hijacked an EgyptAir plane to Libya. They later surrendered to Libyan authorities and were extradited to Egypt.

Lower House rejects security firms draft law

(Continued from page 1)

The Maftaq deputy said he believed the proposal would eventually compel institutions to sign contracts with security firms, which could in the long run undermine the role of the Public Security Department (PSD).

The government, on the other hand, said it was surprised by the deputies' hasty decision to summarily reject the draft without even allowing it to be sent to the concerned House committee for review.

"We need such a contemporary law if we wish to progress," Interior Minister Nayef Qadi told the Jordan Times yesterday.

He said such a law would not only prevent a monopoly but would also "help" in the responsibility of maintaining security by hiring retired servicemen.

Musa Majali, general manager of 14-year-old Middle East Defence and Security Agency, the oldest and largest security firm in Jordan, told

the Jordan Times that the draft law — if passed — could affect some security firms, especially those which do not have the capital requirement and the bank deposit stipulated in the draft law.

The proposal, which applies to current and new firms, requires a JD250,000 capital in addition to a JD50,000 bank guarantee.

The draft also stipulates that the interior minister endorses the firm's founding contract and its internal regulation after obtaining the approval of

the concerned security departments. The minister should also approve the contracts between the firms and clients.

According to the draft law, firm managers and guards have to have previously worked in the Jordan Armed Forces or security agencies.

Article 7 of the draft stipulates that "in conducting its operation, the company is subject to supervision by the PSD, which has the right to conduct inspections of warehouses, offices and registrar books."

The draft will be sent to the Upper House (Senate) for either endorsement, amendment or rejection.

If both Houses agree to reject the law, it will be referred back to the government. If, on the other hand, the Senate decides to endorse or amend the draft it will be returned to the Lower House for further review.

Out of the 55 deputies present during yesterday's Lower House session, 36 voted against the draft legislation.

Jordan, EU working in full coordination, cooperation — Moratinos

(Continued from page 1)

In addition to ensuring their "association" with final status talks, Moratinos listed Jordanian-EU common objectives at the present stage as: "Guaranteeing and monitoring the implementation of the [Oct. 23] Wye agreement; resumption of talks on the Syrian and Lebanese tracks of the peace process; and ensuring that satisfactory progress is achieved on the Palestinian-Israeli track by May 4, 1999."

But the EU will move according to the three parameters that govern its [Middle Eastern] policies: maintaining the principle of the right to self-determination of the

the EU to ensure that a positive atmosphere will prevail by May 4, 1999."

Jordan and the EU "share concerns that if there is no progress, we could face very difficult days."

In reply to a question on European moves should Arafat implement his statements to declare a Palestinian state, the Cyprus-based envoy said it was "too early to say, and it will depend on the factors on the ground at that time."

"But the EU will move according to the three parameters that govern its [Middle Eastern] policies: maintaining the principle of the right to self-determination of the

Palestinian people; ensuring that the peace process can continue; and adopting a unified stand, without splits among its 15 member states."

Moratinos' two-day visit to Jordan, during which he also held talks with Prime Minister Fayez Tarawneh and Foreign Minister Abdul Ilah Khatib, was part of a large regional tour including Israel and the Palestinian self-rule areas, Lebanon, Syria, and Saudi Arabia.

These rounds of talks with the main players in the Middle East reflect Europe's "concerns" on the implementation of the Wye River deal and its determination to reactivate the long-stalled Syrian and Lebanese tracks of the peace process.

"We are trying to ensure the implementation of the second phase of the Wye deal," Moratinos said, calling directly on Israel "not to impose new conditions."

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said on Tuesday that he was unlikely to carry out a promised West Bank withdrawal next week because of alleged Palestinian violations of the six-week-old deal.

"The European perception is that this is an extremely crucial moment for the peace process," Moratinos said.

"We praise Jordan's efforts in trying to consolidate the momentum given to the process by the signing of the Wye [River Memorandum], and the crucial role played by His Majesty King Hussein in the Wye negotiations," he said.

The EU, which allocated ECU 117 million to Jordan under the Media programme, will therefore continue to back Jordan financially and economically.

"We are very aware of the Kingdom's efforts to push its economic development, and we will stand behind Jordan," Moratinos said, adding that the EU was working on a new programme for 1999-2000 to support Jordanian economy.

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Webber, Rice attack record company

LONDON (R) — British composer Andrew Lloyd Webber and lyricist Tim Rice on Wednesday joined forces to attack record companies for what they called their cynical manipulation of the pop singles charts. The pair, famed for writing such blockbuster musicals as "Evita" and "Jesus Christ Superstar," forcefully criticised the companies for downgrading the price of the Boyzone single "Matter What" so it was made ineligible for the charts.

Condom wrapper found in bottle of Coca Cola

NAIROBI (AFP) — A Kenyan court fined the Coca Cola Bottling Co. Ltd. \$100 after a condom wrapper was found in the bottle of Coca Cola according to a parliamentary report in the Daily Nation. A member of parliament who demanded to know why the fine was so paltry was told by Assistant Minister for Industrial Development Joseph Kimungu that the firm had assured him it would strengthen its quality control.

Stitches save Clinton model from trouser scandal

SYDNEY (R) — Visitors to a Madame Tussaud's exhibition in Sydney have become little too intimate with President Clinton's double. Waxworks museum Madame Tussaud's, eager to avoid a Clinton sex scandal, have had to sew up the trouser zipper of the wax copy of the world leader on display. "The figures are very accessible and people tend to get up close to get their photographs taken. We are finding that every time we went past Clinton the zipper was undone," said the exhibitor's general manager.

Man walks from England to France through Channel

CALAIS (AFP) — A Russian man has walked from England to France through the Channel Tunnel, risking death from trains passing at 150 kilometres per hour, official sources said Wednesday. The 36-year-old man, whose police have not named, was picked up on Tuesday by French police at Coquelles. Police and officials from the Eurotunnel operating company said it was a "miracle" that the man survived the trek.

Balloon duo split over differences

GENEVA (AFP) — A pair of adventurers, one British and one Swiss, who had planned to circumscribe the world together non-stop by balloon, are to separate because of personal differences, the organisers announced Wednesday.

Psychiatrist Bertrand Piccard from Switzerland and Briton Tony Brown, an engineer on Concorde, have decided to split. However, Piccard still intends to proceed.

Australian lawyers losing their wigs

SYDNEY (AFP) — Australian lawyers will next year no longer wear their traditional horsehair wigs in appearances before the country's Federal Court. The court's chief justice announced this week that the wigs were no longer either relevant or appropriate in the court. Many of the court's lawyers have criticised their horsehair headresses as an uncomfortable component of their work, especially since judges have been sitting without them for the last four years.

Prophet's letters

AMMAN (AFP) — Royal Jordanian newspaper Al Akhbar reported on Wednesday that a collection of letters written by the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) was found in the ruins of the ancient city of Petra. The letters, which were written in Arabic, were found in a cave and were said to be the first time they have been discovered since the Prophet's death. The letters were found by a team of archaeologists led by Professor Dr. Ibrahim Muharik. The letters were said to be the first time they have been discovered since the Prophet's death. The letters were found by a team of archaeologists led by Professor Dr. Ibrahim Muharik.

Chinese ruling party forms new leadership body

PARTOUM (AFP) — China's ruling Communist Party has formed a new leadership body to replace the Politburo. The new body, called the Politburo Standing Committee, will be responsible for the day-to-day running of the party. The new body will be formed by the 15th National Congress, which is expected to take place in September 1999.

US to revive Lebanon, Syria talks with Israel

BEIRUT (AFP) — The United States is planning a new round of talks to revive peace negotiations between Israel and Syria. The talks will be held in Washington and will involve the Israeli Prime Minister, the Syrian President, and the US Secretary of State. The talks are expected to start in January 1999.

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